

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

November 15, 2022

*No matter who you are,
no matter where you are
on your spiritual journey,
you are welcome here!*

As Jesus' courageous disciples,
living God's grace, we strive to:

- Worship faithfully
- Welcome openly
- Grow spiritually
- Care passionately
- Serve generously



Pastor's Page

One of the songs we sometimes sing as a Gloria at the beginning of worship is an old Shaker song called Simple Gifts. It is a beautiful tune and you may recognize it from Appalachian Spring, a music piece composed by Aaron Copeland. It goes like this:

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the
gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where
I ought to be;
And when we find ourselves in
the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and
delight.*

*When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be
ashamed;
To turn, turn, will be my delight.
Till by turning, turning we come
round right.*

The song speaks about the gift of simplicity. It was written by an elder in the Shaker community, a religious order whose whole purpose was to try to simplify life. They lived in the community and spend much of their time in simple worship and are known for the Shaker design of their furniture.

I say all this because we are in the season of Thanksgiving. This past

Sunday we gathered as a church community to give thanks and soon we will do this as families in our own homes. The act of giving thanks is a simple, but important one. This is a season to stop, however briefly, and simply give thanks. For us as Christians, it is a time to stop and give God thanks. For life. For love. For all that has been given to us. And for our call to live a thankful life by sharing what has been entrusted to us with others.

However you gather, in families small and large, may you stop and simply give thanks.

In Gratitude, Pastor Chris



Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Worship

This year our schedule for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day will be:

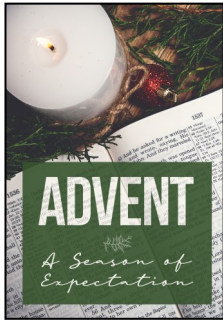
Saturday, December 24, Christmas Eve

Carols and Candles Family Worship at 4:00 pm

Carols and Candles, Choir and Communion Worship at 11:00 pm

Sunday, December 25, Christmas Day

Worship at 10:00 am with Festive Coffee Fellowship Following



Advent Evening Prayer

The weeks prior to Christmas are filled with shopping, baking, decorating, and social gatherings. While those activities support family and community traditions, they are not the kind of preparations connected to Advent. Advent is about re-centering ourselves, to sharpen our ears and focus our attention on the work and way of life God calls us to.

Evening Prayer is an excellent way to re-center yourself. Please join us for worship on the Wednesdays in Advent: **November 30, December 7, 14, and 21, at 6:30–7:00 pm.** This brief service is lovely. It nourishes the soul. Please come.

The Advent Workshop

The annual Advent Workshop will be held following Sunday School on **Sunday, December 4 during Coffee Fellowship.** Stay to make a variety of Christmas ornaments. This is a great family event. Please come and invite friends to join you! Please sign up at church.

Sunday Morning Text Study

You are invited to participate in a conversation about each Sunday's scripture texts on Sunday mornings, **9:00–9:50 am in the Youth Room.** The conversations are engaging and everyone is welcome. This is a great opportunity to explore scripture. Please come! For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Adult Bible Study

Adult Bible Study meets **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30 pm,** in the Youth Room. The current focus is the New Testament book of James. All are welcome. This is a particularly good time to join the Bible study because the group is starting a new book. For information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Financial Pledges for 2023

At our Giving Thanks celebration on November 13 we dedicated our pledges for 2023. If you have not submitted your pledge sheet, please do so today so the church Trustees and Council can develop our budget to fully fund the programs and ministries of the church. We ask three things of all church members, families and friends.

1. If you do not pledge, please start this year.
2. If you do pledge, please increase your pledge, even if just a little bit.
3. Please sign up for e-giving so you will never have to write an offering check again!

Thank you for your generosity. Everything you see in the pages of this newsletter is powered through your generosity. Thank you!

Feed My Starving Children Trip

For the first time since 2019, our youth and adult helpers headed to Feed My Starving Children on a recent Wednesday night to pack meals for starving kids. It is amazing what can happen when we let the power of faith and our time come together. Together,



we fed nearly 32,000 kids which is enough to feed 88 kids for a year. We also presented a check for \$2,800 to help pay for our meals from the M&M money given at Christmas. God bless you all and God bless the kids who will receive this food!





Family Meals

On Wednesday nights, we offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$8 per person with a family max of \$30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:15pm.** Confirmants and interns are \$5 each and are encouraged to eat with their classes at 6:00 pm prior to class or activities at 6:30 pm. We are not offering drive thru service

this year, but you may go through the serving line and a meal will be packaged for you to take home.

Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays. You can make a reservation online, the sign-up table or by calling the church office.

Nov 30 - Boneless BBQ ribs, butter & parsley potatoes, macaroni & cheese, sauerkraut salad, garlic bread

Dec 7 - Beef Stroganoff, noodles, sweet and sour cabbage, veggies, and rolls

Dec 14 - Stuffed shells with meat sauce and chicken Alfredo, salad, garlic bread

Dec 21 - Chicken Marsala, rice, asparagus, choc strawberries

Men's Group

The church Men's Group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00–10:00 am** for coffee, treats and conversation. Pastor Chris leads us in a brief devotion, gives us a topic to discuss and we also have time to meet and catch up. Join us! Talk to Pastor Chris or Brad Williams for more information. Next gatherings are **Nov 29 and Dec 13.** Note on December 13 we will be making sandwiches for the Simpson Shelter! All men are welcome!

Church Photo Directory

If you had your picture taken, you receive a church photo directory. If you have not picked up your new directory, please stop by or call the church office. Thank you to all those who had their picture taken and many thanks to Diane Welsh who coordinated the project.

Children's Advent Musical Rehearsal

The dress rehearsal for the children's Advent musical will be **Saturday, December 17, from 10:00–12:00 noon for children in grades 1–5.** Pre-Schoolers and Kindergarteners do not need to attend the rehearsal.

The musical will be presented during worship on **Sunday, December 18.**

Giving Thanks Meal Thanks

We did it! For the first time since 2019, and after two years of only offering to-go meals, we served our annual Giving Thanks Meal in person. We served 210 people in 28 minutes! A huge thanks to our chief cooks and organizers: Andy and Christina Krueger, Laura Miller and Dave Reilly. Thanks to all our youth from pre-confirmant 6th grade to church interns, parents and even some of our college kids who helped out. It was a great day!





Wednesday, Nov 30 – Middle School Youth Group - Live Action Game - Among Us -
We will be recreating a popular phone game of Among Us in real life! Middle Schoolers will complete roles as either Crewmates or Imposters and will each need to complete their tasks. Students, if you would like to get into the spirit of the game, come dressed in a crewmate costume (solid color, funny hat/accessories, good shoes for running)!

Sunday, Dec 4, 11:00 pm - Advent Workshop - Volunteers needed to help at each station. Please sign up. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-youth2>

Wednesday, Dec 14, 6:30 pm - MS Youth Group Christmas Cookie Decorating - Please sign up so we can have enough supplies. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-middle9>

Wednesday, Dec 21, 6:30 pm - HS Youth Group Christmas Cookie Decorating - Please sign up so we can have enough supplies. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-high4>

Sunday, January 15 - Badlands Snow Tubing 1:30-4:30 pm - Please sign up. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-youth3>

Church Yoga

Jan Hansen's church yoga group meets on **Tuesdays and Thursdays** in the church Fellowship Hall from **9:00-10:00 am** and via Zoom. Please contact the church office to receive the Zoom link.



Offering QR Code

1. On your device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click tab 'Give Online'



Cribbage Night

The cribbage group is meeting on the second Monday at the church. Players are asked to donate \$2 and the group decides which charity to donate it to. Playing time starts at **7:00 pm**. All players and abilities welcome. The next game will be **December 12**.

Mortgage Summary—As of Oct. 31

Original cost of Facilities Expansion Project	\$2,386,970.00
Remaining amount on Bank Loan	\$280,776.19
Cash on hand in the Building Fund	\$215,636.52
Interest Rate (Locked in through January 2027)	3.39%
Monthly Payment	\$2,622.76

Treasurer's Report

	Week of	Year to Date
	Nov 6, 2022	
General Fund Income*	\$ 9,252	\$ 406,444
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,909	\$ 445,905

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

Church Staff Contact Info

Pastor: Chris Myers—chris@firstchurchrf.org
Office: Missy Luedtke—missy@firstchurchrf.org
Education: Stacy Myers—stacy@firstchurchrf.org
Mission: Deb Meyer—deb@firstchurchrf.org
Youth: Alex and Sarah Plum—rfyouthgroup@gmail.com
Music: Jamie Mills—degolierjamie@gmail.com
Choir: Sarah Plum—sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com
Building: Farnum Fuller—farnumfuller@gmail.com
Maintenance: Tim Bylander—timthefixitguy@gmail.com



2022 Christmas Luncheon

You are invited to attend a Christmas Luncheon on **Tuesday, December 6, starting at noon.** The Fellowship Hall will be decorated, the food will be delicious, the company hard to beat, and the River Falls High School Costumed Carolers provide the entertainment. Please come!

We have drivers willing to pick up anyone who needs a ride. The cost is \$10.00 per person. Please make a reservation at church or online and let the office know if you need a ride. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-christmas2>

We are looking for volunteers to help prepare for the Christmas luncheon. We need cooks for Monday, December 5, volunteers to iron the tablecloths on December 5, and three more people to help with serving and clean up. To volunteer, please sign up at church.



Cookie Making Event

The Shoebox Project would like to have home-made Christmas cookies to deliver with the items to be given to the Kinnic Drug and Alcohol Rehab Center residents on December 14. There is a sign-up sheet on the table for people to sign up to volunteer their time and recipes for this cookie making event on **Friday, December 9 at 10:00 am in the church kitchen.** All supplies will be furnished. If you have a special recipe that you wish to share, please contact Jean Smith at 715-781-6880 or Eunice at 715-497-4514.

Will be a fun time! We will even order pizza for lunch and, of course, there will be tasting! Join us!

Christmas Shoebox Project

The yoga group and church members have supported a "Christmas Shoebox" for the men at the Kinnic Drug and Alcohol Rehab Center in River Falls. We are collecting items and will fill the boxes and bags and deliver them to the Kinnic Rehab to show that we all care! These shoeboxes contain socks, playing cards, puzzles, soap, toothpaste, and many other items. A list of items is on the sign-up table. Cash donations will be used to purchase any needed items. If you have questions, please contact Jean Smith at jsmithler@yahoo.com or at 715-781-6880 or call the church office.



Altar Flowers

Please sign up to provide flowers for the altar for Sunday worship. Sign up at church or on the church website:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-altar>

Welcomers Needed

Please sign up to be a welcomer on Sunday morning before the worship service. One person is needed for at the bottom of the stairs at the 3rd Street Entrance. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to the worship service. Sign up at church or here: [https://](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-welcomers)

www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-welcomers

Coffee Fellowship Hosts and Liturgists Needed

Coffee Fellowship Hosts will be asked to serve Best Maid cookies which are in the church freezer, make lemonade and/or serve coffee. All the materials are provided, you will simply need to serve and clean up. Sign up at church or on the website: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-coffee>

Liturgists will lead us in the Call to Worship and one of the Scripture Lessons. The material will be emailed out on Thursday to practice. Sign up at church or on the website: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-liturgist>

Please note church interns can receive credit for either of these activities. Thank you for volunteering in these important ministries as we continue our journey.

Learning Community Event:

A Conversation about Christian Nationalism

Since the founding of our nation, Christians have been concerned about the relationship and between church and state. In recent years, this issue has gained intensity with the rise of the Christian Nationalist movement. Christian Nationalists co-opt the language and symbols of Christianity, using them for their own purpose and political gain, resulting in harm to both the Christian faith and American democracy.

To understand this movement, members of First Congregational Church are invited to attend a Learning Community event on **Tuesday, February 7, 6:30–8:30 pm**, entitled “Christian Nationalism: What it Is, Why it Matters, and How We Can Respond.” The presenter will be The Rev. Rolf Olson, an ELCA pastor. Pastor Olson will provide an historical perspective of Christian Nationalism and compare it to Christianity and Jesus’ Way. The evening will include dessert and time for conversation. For more information or to register for the event, please contact Pastor Stacy or Pastor Chris.

People in the Pews: Rene Bylander

My name is Rene Bylander. I’ve been happily married to Tim for more than 35 years. Together we have a son, Matthew who is in the Army. I moved around a lot when I was growing up because my dad was in the Air Force. For the past 29 years, I’ve lived on a hobby farm just south of River Falls. I teach computer programming at Northwood Technical College in New Richmond and sometimes help around the farm.

Honestly, I do not know the exact number of years we have been members of the church, but I think it is more than 15 years. The first day we walked into the church Pastor Chris was drawing on the sidewalk with kids. Although at the time, we did not know he was the pastor, it was a good sign to see an adult engaged with kids. We stay because of the congregation, fellowship, and pastors. The congregation is welcoming and friendly. The messages, from all our pastors, are thought provoking and relevant for the here and now.

I do not have one favorite Bible verse, instead I tend to string together part of these three.

Fear Not! (Isaiah 41:10)

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)

Together, these verses calm me, center me, and help me remember whose I am.

During the summer, I enjoy our screened in porch. It is my happy place where I watch birds, drink my morning coffee, and have dinner; I also enjoy going on walks. Another favorite pastime is listening to live music. At night, Tim and I read books together; actually, he reads, and I listen. In the winter, I enjoy knitting by the woodstove and putting together puzzles.

People are usually surprised to find out that I am an introvert. And one thing many people do not know about me is that I bungee jumped off of a 229-foot bridge and yes, I have the T-shirt to prove it.



SERVE generously

Simpson Shelter Needs

- New men's boxers—sizes S, M, L and XL
- New men's t-shirts—sizes S, M, L, XL, and XXL
- New women's underwear—sizes 5, 6, 7, and 8
- New women's t-shirts—sizes S, M, XL, and XXL
- Deodorant
- Shaving cream and razors
- Travel size shampoo, conditioner, body wash, and bar soap
- Towels
- Toothbrushes

There is a box at the church for donations. Thank you!

Save Family Fresh Receipts

ARC gets \$1,000 for every \$150,000 in receipts, so every dollar counts. ARC is the agency funded by local churches to help address the immediate needs of people in our community (rent, utility, gas, repair help). A box for receipts is on the back table.

Save Your Batteries to Recycle!

We have a container available for recycling all those old, depleted batteries. Start saving them now and bring them to church. We'll pass them on to the recyclers and keep them out of landfills and the environment in our ongoing commitment to sustainability.



Advent Wreaths

During Sunday School on November 27, the First Sunday in Advent, Sunday School students will receive and decorate Advent wreaths.

Many thanks to Marshall Skule for making the wreaths and to Evelyn Purdy for making the velvet candle rings that students will decorate.

Do you Smile? Do You smile ?

Did you know the church has received nearly \$500 from Amazon through its Amazon Smiles charity program? It is fast, free and easy to set up. If you have an Amazon account go to smile.amazon.com and register First Congregational Church of River Falls. Then each quarter the church will receive a small portion of total amazon shopping. Start smiling today!

Empty Pill Bottles

The River Falls Lions Club is collecting empty pill bottles, both prescription and over the counter, to send to Africa where there is an urgent need. The bottles will be washed, and the labels soaked off before they are shipped. A blue collection tub is in the gathering area. Please see Carole Mottaz with questions.

Volunteer Opportunities at Among Friends

Among Friends is seeking one or two volunteers on Tuesdays to provide transportation for 2 female participants who live in Hudson. Clients could be picked up at 9:00 am from their locations in Hudson and returned home from the church to Hudson at 2:00 pm. Mileage reimbursement would be provided. Also, we need a volunteer to set up for lunch and do dishes from 11:30 am-12:30 pm. For information, call Norma at (651) 260-5725.



Among Friends

Among Friends is a community-based social respite program serving adults with memory loss who reside in Pierce and St. Croix Counties. For more information about Among Friends, contact them at 715-293-2651. Also, check out the website: amongfriendsrfr.com and Facebook page. Among Friends is located at the church. Guests are invited to join them for coffee from 9:30-10:00 am on the last Tuesday of the month.



FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, UCC
RIVER FALLS

Office Phone: 715-425-2052

E-mail: office@firstchurchrf.org

Website: www.firstchurchrf.org

STAFF

Chris Myers, Pastor

Stacy Johnson, CE Minister

Deb Meyer, Minister for Community and Outreach

Missy Luedtke, Office Administrator

Joel Larsen, Moderator

Alex and Sarah Plum, Youth Ministers

Jamie Mills, Music Coordinator and Bell Choir Director

Sarah Plum, Choir Director

Marsha Pearson, Organist

Terry Mithun, Organist

Tim Bylander, Building Supervisor

Farnum Fuller, Custodian

Pastor's home phone number:

Chris Myers 715-426-2075

chris@firstchurchrf.org

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

110 N. Third Street
River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

PERMIT #53

RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NOVEMBER 15, 2022

First Communion Information for Parents

When do children at First Congregational Church begin taking Communion?

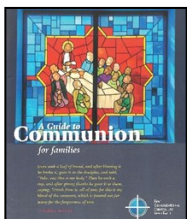
There is no uniform age at First Congregational Church when children begin participating in the Lord's Supper. Some children are pre-school age, others are in elementary school, and some wait until confirmation to begin taking Communion. The Bible and church history do not give decisive guidelines about the age to begin celebrating the Lord's Supper. The decision about when people are welcome at the Lord's Table has largely been made by local worshipping communities. Our practice is to include children when they and their parents think they are ready to participate.

How will I know when my child is ready?

Some parents choose infant communion for their children. Many parents wait until their children express an interest. Typically, children are ready to participate in Communion when they start asking questions about this sacrament. One important theme of Communion is inclusion: All are welcome at the table of the Lord. If a child feels excluded, it is a good time for that child to begin participating.

My child does not yet receive Communion. Should she/he still come forward?

Yes, all people are invited to come forward to the servers at the Communion distribution time. Children who will not be communing should keep their hands folded (as opposed to reaching out). This is a signal to the pastor and deacons that the child desires a blessing.



Communion Resource for Families

First Congregational Church has a new *Guide to Communion*. The resource was specifically designed for families, but it could be helpful for adults as well. Copies of the guide are available on the table in the gathering space.