

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://www.firstchurchrf.org)

August 15, 2023

*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

As I write this our church building is simply buzzing. It is day two of Vacation Bible School which is one of the highlights of the church summer season (see pictures later in this newsletter). And since it is Tuesday, the Yoga group is meeting and our Among Friends program for those dealing with dementia is in session. Literally every space in the building is being used today and it is glorious.

Think about those three programs for a bit: VBS, Yoga and Among Friends. In the grand scheme of life, these are really quite modest endeavors. None of these by themselves will solve some of the big scary problems our world is facing. But what they do accomplish is bringing people together. VBS brings together an incredibly rich variety of ages and people. When you add the number of kids, volunteers and helpers who participate, it is well over a hundred people who learn, laugh and serve together. Plus, with Among Friends meeting here today, we have some of the oldest and youngest church folk interacting with each other, each appreciating and learning from one another. This is counter cultural stuff folks. But it doesn't just happen. Someone stepped up and acted.

One of the most famous of Jesus' miracles was the feeding of the 5000, often call the Miracle of Loaves and Fishes. Do you remember the story? It is found in all four gospels (Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, John 6) and it recalls the time a large crowd of people gathered to hear Jesus preach and teach. Evening came and there was not enough food to eat so the disciples urged Jesus to send the people away to buy their own food in the surrounding towns. Instead Jesus challenged

the disciples to feed them even though they only had a few loaves and fishes. And yet by the end of the evening, all had been fed and there were more leftovers than they started out with. The miracle shows not just Jesus' power, but also the hidden power God has placed in Jesus' followers.

All the programs I listed above started out as just a few loaves and fishes, something humble and relatively modest. And yet with God's blessing they have become true gifts.

Our yoga group gifts a core group of twenty or so people with healthy minds and bodies.

Our Among Friends group gifts families dealing with dementia with some well needed peace and a healthy place to leave their loved one.

And VBS, well where else in our world today do 3 and 93 year olds come together to learn and laugh together?

Again, all of these programs grew out of a few loaves and fishes, the offerings of people's time, talent and treasure that with God's blessing have become life-giving ministries. So how might God be calling you to use your simple loaf or small fish in God's service?

In Gratitude, Pastor Chris



Rally Day marks the return of the program year. This year Rally Day will be **Sunday, September 10** when worship will move to 10:00 am and Sunday School and the Adult Forum will resume along with music practices. Our schedule will be:

9:00 am     Adult Forum and Choir/Bell practice  
10:00 am     Worship with Sunday School  
11:00 am     Coffee Fellowship



Even though it is summer, we are making plans for fall and the beginning of Sunday School. Please volunteer to help with Sunday School for the 2023-24 school year. All classes are team taught. No one teaches every week. Please consider helping to support this critical ministry of the church. Please sign up at church or online: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-sunday2>

## Wednesday School Workers Needed

Wednesday School begins on **October 4**. We need adult volunteers, drivers to transport children from school to church, and people to provide snacks. Please consider volunteering.

Please sign up at church or online: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-wednesday56>



## Confirmation Kick-Off

All 6th–12th graders and their parents are invited to the Confirmation Kick-Off Event on **Wednesday, September 13 at 6:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall**. This will be the first night of programming for 6th grade Pre-Confirmation, Years 1–3 Confirmation (grades 7–9), Church Interns and our Middle and High School Youth Groups. We will review meeting dates, complete forms, talk about trips to Feed My Starving Children, Spring Break Mission Trip to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi as well as a long-delayed Winter Retreat for both Middle and High School youth. Mark your calendars!

## Wednesday School Registrations

All children who will be in kindergarten through Grade 5 in the fall of 2023, are invited to participate in Wednesday School. Elementary students in River Falls are picked up at the four elementary schools in town at the end of the school day. Wednesday School concludes at 5:15. Registration and permission forms are available on the church website and in the church office. It is important to have advance registration in order to be adequately prepared for students, particularly due to transportation needs. Wednesday School begins **October 4**. Please contact Pastor Stacy with questions.

## Adult Bible Study Resumes

Wednesday afternoon Adult Bible Study resumes on **September 13, 1:00–2:30 pm**. The group will read and discuss the first book in the Bible, Genesis. Our resource book is *Genesis* by W. Sibley Towner, of the Westminster Bible Companion series. Copies are available in the church office for \$25.00. It is possible to buy a less expensive used copy on Amazon. In preparation for September 13, please read the Introduction, pages 1–10.

The fall is a great time to join the group. Through shared discussion, participants learn a lot and explore a great many issues connected to scripture and faith. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.



## VBS Thanks

Another VBS year is in the books. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped during the week: Eleanor Adams, Sonja Adams, Kaye Anderson, Laura Anderson, Casey Beatty, Nathan Clark, Alice Follstad, Dawn Follstad, Noah Follstad, Jennie Friese, Judy Fuller, Christina Krueger, Larissa Lueck, Jenny Luedke, Karen Lloyd, Deb Meyer, Jamie Mills, Becky Pajac, Evelyn Purdy, Norma Revels, Connor Rude, Erica Sippel, Julia Skule, Marshall Skule, Rhett Theisen, Gabi VanDell, Ellie Villeneuve, Jane Wakefield, Cheyenne Wilson, and Thanks also to everyone who brought delicious homemade cookies.

Additionally, thank you to Tim Bylander who built the house and transported A LOT of sand for the archaeological dig; to Andy & Christina Krueger who cooked a family-friendly (novel and tasty!) Mac-N-Cheese bar for the Thursday dinner; to the kitchen crew on Thursday evening; to all the bakers who keep the children supplied with marvelous cookies; to Marshall Skule for a tremendous amount of preparation for this year's "Marshall Projects"; and to the folks who helped to put up and take down the backdrops.

Bottom line: First Congregational is a wonderful church family that supports children. The congregation's vitality is on full display during VBS. Thanks, everyone.







## Peach Fundraiser Update

The peaches are coming! But they are coming later than expected. With the weather out west seesawing between hot and cold, we now expect the peaches to arrive **August 24 or 25**. The good news is that this gives us time to sell more peaches! **Orders must be placed by August 14.**

The cost is: 1 single-layer box is \$23.00; 2 single-layer boxes are \$22.00 each; 3 or more single-layer boxes are \$21.00 each. There are 3 ways to order:

1. Email [office@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:office@firstchurchrf.org)
2. Sign up at church or online: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-washington3>
3. Call: 715-425-2052 – Mon-Thurs from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm or leave a message with name, phone and number of boxes.

This is an annual fundraiser for our youth. Thank you for your support!



## School Supplies Needed

Once again we are collecting school supplies for local families. As you are out shopping, please start collecting everything students might need this fall (crayons, pens, pencils, notebooks, backpacks, etc). The School Supply Event will be **August 21–22** here at the church. Typically we serve about 300 students. Thank you for your generous support of this needed local ministry.

## Upcoming Events

Mon., Aug 21 and Tues., Aug 22—Tools for School Free School Supply Give Away  
 Sun., Sept 3—Last Summer 9:30 am Worship Service  
 Sun., Sept 10—Rally Day with beginning of the program year and worship at 10:00 am  
 Wed., Sept 13—Confirmation Kick-Off for all 6th–12th graders and parents  
 Sun., Sept 17—Holy Land Trip Meeting after worship in Youth Room  
 Tues., Sept 19—All Church Meeting Night—all new and existing committee members meet

## Sunday School Teachers Meeting

Sunday School teachers for the 2023-24 school year will gather for an organizational meeting, **September 7, 2023, 6:00–7:00 pm.**



## Chocolate Boutique Part Two

A Relational Bible Experience for Women  
Tuesdays, Sep 26, Oct 3, & Oct 10 at 6:30 pm

Join Deb Meyer to renew your spirit with a three-session series on Grace.

- Sep 26 God's Grace is a Way of Life
- Oct 3 God's Grace Overs to Others
- Oct 10 God's Grace is Reason to Celebrate

This is part two of the Chocolate Boutique that was held in the Spring. Each session is complete by itself, so you can come to one, two or all three. You can join us even if you didn't come to the Spring Session. Please sign up at church.



## Chancel Choir

To anyone who loves to sing, now is the time to try out our Chancel Choir! Our first rehearsal of the season will be

**September 6.** We sing in the service 2-3 times a month and rehearse from 7:00-8:15 pm on Wednesday evenings in the music room. We are flexible with schedules as well. Feel free to come and sing with us; no prior experience needed, just a love for singing, fellowship, and some good laughs. If you have any questions, please reach out to Sarah Plum at [sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com) or 715-418-9393.

## A Message from your UCC "Green Team"

Creation is our gift from God. We hope to give you ideas that help everyone to care for God's gift of planet earth, our common home. "Going Green" doesn't have to be a daunting task that means sweeping life changes. Simple things can make a difference. The ideas we offer may not be new, but they bear repeating. Sometimes it takes a few reminders for things to take root.

**USE BOTH SIDES OF PAPER:** U.S. businesses and home offices throw away 21 million tons of paper every year, equal to 175 pounds per office worker. Students can be taught reasonable paper usage too. Set your printer's default option to print double-sided (duplex printing). And when culling your paperwork and files, remember to take them to the recycling bin.

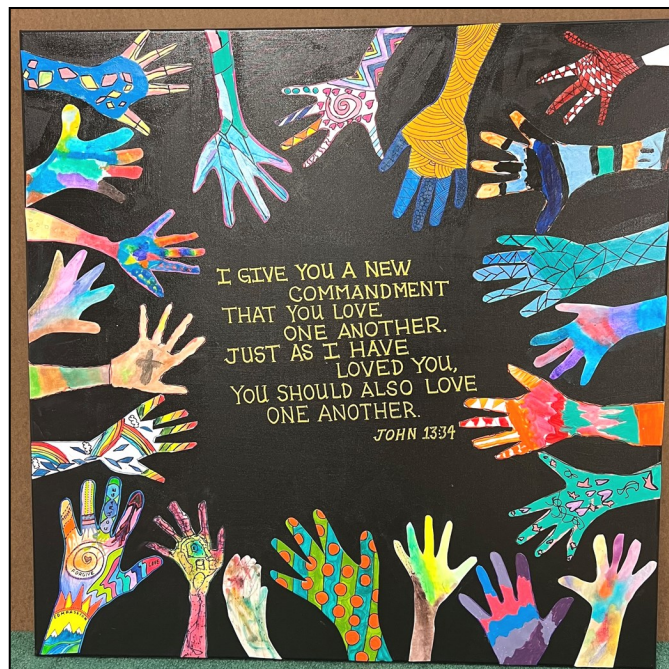
**RETHINK BOTTLED WATER:** Nearly 90% of plastic water bottles are not recycled, instead taking thousands of years to decompose. Buy a reusable container and fill it with tap water, a great choice for the environment, your wallet, and possibly your health. The EPA's standards for tap water are more stringent than the FDA's standards for bottled water. Wash your reusable containers by hand to prevent plastics from breaking down in the dishwasher.

**DON'T PREHEAT THE OVEN:** Unless you are making bread or pastries of some sort, don't pre-heat the oven. Just turn it on when you put the dish in. Also when checking on your food, look through the oven window instead of opening the door.

**DIAPER WITH A CONSCIENCE:** By the time a child is toilet trained, a parent will change between 5,000 and 8,000 diapers, adding up to approximately 3.5 million tons of waste in U.S. landfills each year. Whether you choose cloth or a more environmentally-friendly disposable, you are making a choice that has a much gentler impact on our planet. Truly, diapering is a tough issue. Do what you can to save the impact on our earth.

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## Vacation Bible School Projects





## Let Justice and Peace Flow

Season of Creation 2023

***Celebrate the Earth - Unite in Prayer & Action!***

### **September 3, 5:00 PM**

Journey House Campus Ministry  
143 East Cascade

### **Forest Sunday**

Service of Reflection  
Heather Rushfeldt & David Behling  
Music: Emma Esanbock & Ella Esanbock

### **September 10, 5:00 PM**

Hope Lutheran Church  
3357 Kingsbarn Avenue

### **Land Sunday**

Service of Reflection  
Deb Meyer, Annie Ladnier/Bill Montgomery  
**Music: TBD**

### **September 17, 5:00 PM**

Spirit of Grace Church  
127 S. Second Street

### **Wilderness Sunday**

Service of Reflection  
David Behling & Emma Esanbock  
Music: Emma Esanbock and friends

### **September 24, 5:00 PM**

Ezekiel Lutheran Church  
202 S. Second Street

### **River Sunday**

Service of Reflection  
Steve Dow & Sandy Taufener  
Music: Thomas Smith and Chris Termaat

### **Sunday, October 1, 5:00 PM**

First Congregational Church  
110 N. Third Street

### **Blessing of Endangered Animals**

Service of Blessing and Reflection  
Amy Delong & Martha Termaat  
Music: UCC Green Team/Music Team

## **Spring Break Mission Trip**

Once again we are leading a mission trip to UCC-related Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi in March 2024 over Spring Break.

These trips are literally life-changing, both for the communities we serve and for the people who participate in them. Our hope is that everyone will have an opportunity to participate at some point, but especially our teens. Once again we have obtained coveted spots for the Mission Trip on **March 16-23, 2024**. Sign-ups will be this fall. In addition to youth, we also need skilled helpers. Please consider signing up and blocking out those dates on your calendars! You must be 14 and older to participate.





## People in The Pews: Peter Rayne

1. *Where did you grow up?* I was born and raised in Racine, Wisconsin. My family moved to a hobby farm when I was eight years old and raised horses. I had a Connemara Stallion and a few mares. We had about 10 or 12 of our own horses and had another 6 or so boarders and I was the primary chore boy through junior high and high school. Additionally, I learned to ride and train horses and my first jobs were horse training and rider instruction.
2. *Where do you live now?* My wife Natasha and I live on a small farm 7 miles South of River Falls.
3. *How long have you been attending First Congregational Church?* I think I started attending in about 2015 and joined soon thereafter.
4. *What keeps you coming back to church at First Congregational?* What keeps me coming back is I enjoy having connections with the community, and growing spiritually. The many ways the congregation serves our community provide copious opportunities to step in and go beyond my comfort zone. This helps me discover new things about God's plans for my life.
5. *What is your favorite Bible passage, quote, or hymn. Why?* My favorite Bible passage...this continues to evolve...currently I'm stuck on Philippians 4:4-7  
Rejoice in the Lord always. I say it again; Rejoice!  
Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.  
Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.  
And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.  
I'm generally a pretty happy person and the first verse affirms the reason I should feel this way...the second reminds me not to be brash or overly self-confident...the third reminds me of the power of prayer and God's love.
6. *What is your favorite hobby or pastime?* My favorite hobby is spending time outdoors with my wife and kid. Hiking, biking, skiing, kayaking or canoeing, camping, managing trails, woods and prairie on our farm, planting trees, and maintaining our vegetable garden.
7. *Tell us something about you or your family that may surprise us.* I've donated blood 51 times, and my goal is to get to over 80...B+, it's more than just a blood type. My favorite saying is...Judge cookies, Love people (not the other way around).



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## Regarding People

- For Bonnie and Dick Jones Witthuhn who celebrated their 49th wedding anniversary, congratulations, only one more year til the big one!
- For Randy and Diane Welsh who celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary on August 27, congratulations on this milestone and may your love continue to grow
- For Cindy Gandrud and Alan Tuchtenhagen who celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary, may your wedding vows continue to grow and deepen

## Endowment Grants

Each quarter the Endowment Grant Committee meets to evaluate proposals for new ministries and projects submitted through our church committees. Does your group have a new idea you want to pursue? Is there a need in the church or community your group wants to address? Consider applying for an Endowment Grant! The group has \$12,400 to award this year. All proposals must come from a committee and the dates for submission are: **September 17, December 10**. Forms can be accessed through the church office or on the church website under 'connect' then 'forms' tabs.

## Second Holy Land Tour

In 2019, 24 people from church participated in a Holy Land Tour to visit important places in our Christian faith like Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Galilee. We also learned about the cultural and political struggle between Jews and Palestinians and how the three great religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam literally converge in Jerusalem. Planning this tour took a long time. Pastor Chris is in the beginning stages of planning another Holy Land Tour. A date has not been announced, but if you want to be kept in the loop about developments and involved in determining the timing of a trip, please use the sign-up sheets to register your interest. ***An interest meeting will be held on Sunday, Sept. 17 after worship in the Youth Room.***



## Softball News

Our games are on Monday evenings at Hoffman Park in River Falls.

Our next few games are:

**Aug 14 at 7:45 pm vs. First Covenant**

**Aug 21 at 7:45 pm vs. The River**

**Aug 27 Tournament games, times TBD**

Come cheer us on and enjoy a great evening of summer fun!

If you have any questions, contact our co-managers Sarah Plum at 715-418-9393 or Deb Hoffman at 612-308-4945.

## Current Capital Campaign

Total Pledged	\$596,646.00
Total Received to Date	<u>420,528.71</u>
Remaining Balance	\$176,117.29

## Mortgage Summary—As of July 15, 2023

Original Cost of Facilities Expansion Project	\$2,386,970.00
Remaining Amount on Bank Loan	\$108,471.11
Interest Rate (Locked in through January 2027)	3.39%
Monthly Payment	\$2,622.76

Our current three-year capital campaign began June 2022 and will end in May 2025. It will eliminate our bank loan, fund a new church sign and upgrades to the audio visual capabilities in the church building. Thanks to your generosity and faithful, upfront giving for the current Capital Campaign, we were able to make a \$75,000 payment on the principal last month. Thank you!

## Treasurer's Report

	Week of <u>Aug 6, 2023</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 12,487	\$ 310,526
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,268	\$ 328,576

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



## SERVE generously

### Simpson Shelter Needs

Urgent supply needs for June:

- Men's T-shirts—all sizes
- Men's boxers—all sizes
- Men's short socks
- Women's white crew socks
- Personal size body wash
- Flip flops/shower shoes

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

### 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.

### Empty Pill Bottles (Prescription Only)

The River Falls Lions Club is collecting empty pill bottles, prescription only, 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.

### Need a Lift?

The Hoffman family have a multi-level chair lift that needs a new home. Interested? Talk to Cheryl Hoffman at 715-338-8281.

### Merry Widows

They will meet **Wed, August 16 at 1:00 pm at Ras' on Main in Hammond, WI**. All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

### Church Yoga

The 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.



### Cribbage Night

The cribbage group will begin meeting again on the second Monday at the church. Players are asked to donate \$2 and the group decides which charity to donate to. Playing time starts at **7:00 pm**. All players and abilities welcome. The next game will be **September 11**.

### Men's Group

The church Men's Group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am** for coffee, treats and conversation during the program year. Right now, we are on summer vacation until **September 12!**



### Blood Drive

The next scheduled Red Cross Blood Drive will be on **Friday, September 15, from 11:00 am-5:00 pm**. You can register at [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)



### 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'



### 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, contact them at 715-293-2561. Also, check out the website: [amongfriendsrf.com](http://amongfriendsrf.com) and the Facebook page. Among Friends is located at the church and is held on **Tuesdays from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm**.



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Office Phone: 715-425-2052  
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Website: [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://www.firstchurchrf.org)

## STAFF

Chris Myers, Pastor  
Stacy Johnson, CE Minister  
Deb Meyer, Minister for Community and Outreach  
Missy Luedtke, Office Administrator  
Kathy Rausch, 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](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org)

## FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

110 N. Third Street  
River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

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RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

AUGUST 15, 2023

## 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 & one person is needed at the ramp entrance. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to worship. Sign up at church or here: <https://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.

## Newsletter Deadlines

The church newsletter is sent out twice a month. Deadlines are the 10th and 25th of each month. Items should be sent to the church office no later than those dates.