

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

February 4, 2024



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN**

February 4, 2024

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

10:00 am

Gathering

You will know as much of God, and only as much of God,
as you are willing to put into service.

- Eric Liddell

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today! Join us for coffee in the Fellowship Hall following the worship service.

- The nursery is available for young children.
- Activity bags are available for children.
- Large print bulletins are available from the ushers.
- Please stand when noted by the *
- Congregation responses are in bold.
- Please stop at the welcome station for a gift.

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*

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Come, listen to the story,

P: Of God's love and grace.

L: Come, tell the story,

P: Of Jesus' life and saving work.

L: Come, experience the story,

P: Of the Spirit's renewing power.

L: Come, live the story,

P: Of God, who makes all things new.

All: Come, let us listen and tell, experience and live the Good News together!

Be Though My Vision

Unison

The musical score is written for unison in 3/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It consists of four systems, each with a vocal line and a bass line. The lyrics are as follows:

1. Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
2. Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
3. Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
4. Great God of heav - en, my vic - to - ry won,

naught be all else to me, save that thou art
I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
may I reach heav - en's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!

thou my best thought by day or by night,
thou my re - deem - er, my love thou hast won,
thou and thou on - ly, first in my heart,
Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,

wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
thou in me dwell - ing, and I with thee one.
Great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
still be my vi - sion, O Ru - ler of all.

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: O Lord our God, you are wise;

P: You know our thoughts before we reveal them to you.

L: O Lord our God, you are compassionate;

P: You know our joys and fears before we name them to you.

L: O Lord our God, you are just;

P: You offer us mercy while we cringe at the expectation of judgment and punishment.

L: O Lord our God, you welcome every one of us;

P: In spite of our weaknesses, our failures, our doubts, you invite each one of us into your presence.

All: We praise you, O God, and pray for your mercy and forgiveness. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: When we seek God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ,

P: God responds to us with mercy and grace.

L: Celebrate God's love for you,

P: By reaching out with love to others!

L: In Christ we are forgiven.

P: Thanks be to God.

L: May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

P: And also with you.

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

***GLORIA**

We are singing, for the Lord is our light, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

We are singing, for the Lord is our light, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

We are singing, oh, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

We are singing, oh, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 40:25-31

PSALM 147:1-11 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R

My soul is thirst - ing My soul is thirst - ing oh, - my soul is

6
thirst - ing for you, O Lord my God.

L: Praise the LORD! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for God is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.

P: **The LORD builds up Jerusalem; God gathers the outcasts of Israel.**

L: God heals the broken-hearted, and binds up their wounds.

P: **God determines the number of the stars; God gives to all of them their names.**

L: Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

P: **The LORD lifts up the downtrodden; God casts the wicked to the ground.**

L: Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre.

P: **God covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the hills.**

L: God gives to the animals their food, and to the young ravens when they cry.

P: **Delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor pleasure in the speed of a runner; but the LORD takes pleasure in those who trust him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. R**

Celebrating the Meal

(All Christians are welcome at the table of our Lord. The bread is gluten-free. Red wine and white grape juice are offered. Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.)

The Invitation to the Meal

L: Today we gather at the table of the Lord where ordinary gifts of bread and wine are shared, where a vision for a new heaven and a new earth shine forth for all to see.

P: **We come to be filled where once we were hungry.**

L: We come to have our thirst quenched where once we were parched.

P: **We come to find peace in a broken world.**

All: **We come and gather around the table so that together we may become God's faithful followers.**

The Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

P: **And also with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

L: It is right and good always to give thanks, ...

The Words of Institution

L: We praise your name as we proclaim the mystery of faith...

All: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Prayer of Consecration

Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

Here I Am Lord

Congregation join on refrain:

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

You Are My All In All

Congregation join on refrain:

Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is your name!

Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is your name!

Bind Us Together

Congregation join on refrain:

***Bind us together, Lord, bind us together
with cords that cannot be broken.
Bind us together, Lord, bind us together,
bind us together in love.***

Taste and See

Congregation join on refrain:

***Taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord.
O taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.***

Post-Communion Prayer

All: We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Proclaiming the Word

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Chris Myers

SONG (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)

***I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river in my soul.
I've got river in my soul.***

GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 1:35-39

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

How Can I Keep From Singing

Verses



1. My life flows on in end - less song A -
2. Through all the tu - mult and the strife, I
3. What though the tem - pest 'round me roar, I
4. When ty - rants trem - ble, sick with fear, And
5. The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, A



bove earth's lam - en - ta - tion. I hear the real though
hear that mu - sic ring - ing; It sounds and ech - oes
hear the truth it liv - eth. What though the dark - ness
hear their death knells ring - ing; When friends re - joice both
foun - tain ev - er spring - ing. All things are mine since



far - off hymn That hails a new cre - a - tion.
in my soul; How can I keep from sing - ing?
'round me close, Songs in the night it giv - eth.
far and near, How can I keep from sing - ing?
I am his; How can I keep from sing - ing?

Refrain



No storm can shake my in - most calm, While to that rock I'm



cling - ing. Since love is Lord of heav - en and earth,



How can I keep from sing - ing?'

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – United Church of Christ**

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

Lord in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

Steal Away

Chancel Choir

Arr. Patrick Dupre Quigley

***DOXOLOGY**

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father, there is no shadow of turning with thee; thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not; as though hast been thou forever wilt be.

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided – Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

O God, from your fullness, we have received grace upon grace. Grant that we will be good stewards of your gifts and graces. May we resist the impulse to live for ourselves instead of for others. May we choose generosity over greed and humility over influence and power. We pray in the name of the One you sent to save us, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

#471

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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Connecting With Cooking

Thanks to all who participated in our first two Cooking with Peter classes. We have two more scheduled for February. Use the sign-up sheets and please pay for your spot when you reserve! Here are more pictures from this week.



SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Larissa Lueck
Deacons: Karen Lloyd, Marshall Skule,
Brian Miller, Lance Lueck,
Cindy Gandrud
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Ryan Luedtke
Trustee: Scott Nelson
Welcomers: Barb Mahoney, JoAnn Lentz
Coffee
Fellowship: Church Council
Counters: Jean Smith, Jane Truesdill

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Christopher Myers
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers
Community &
Outreach Pastor: Deb Meyer
Youth Ministers: Alex Plum
Music Coordinator &
Bell Director: Jamie Mills
Choir Director: Sarah Plum
Organists: Terry Mithun,
Marsha Pearson
Building Manager: Timothy Bylander
Church Moderator: Kathy Rausch
Office Administrator: Missy Luedtke
Nursery Attendant: Kahla Fuller
Custodian: Farnum Fuller

Treasurer's Report

Dec 31, 2023

General Fund Income	\$ 528,071.20
General Fund Expenses	\$ 527,945.35
2023 Net Income	<u>\$ 125.85</u>

Jan 21, 2024

General Fund Income*	<u>\$ 74,180.01</u>
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A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

A new budget will be approved at the Feb 4 Annual Meeting.



Offering QR Code

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

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Dorothy Shavers, Onawa (granddaughter of Bobbie Kuhn), Carsten (grandson of Duane Church), Margo Bartness, Sarah

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our church leaders leading our Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 4, especially our Moderator Kathy Rausch and Vice Moderator Marie Roe, may you receive wisdom and guidance
- For our Spring Break Mission Team serving a Shrimp Boil on Wednesday, March 13 (new date!) in the Fellowship Hall from 5:15 to 6:30 pm, may it be a fun time (and buy tickets starting this week!)
- For our Church Council as they begin reading the book All The Lonely People, that they may see ways we can creatively reach out with God's love to our community
- For those who received blood as part of the recent Blood Drive in our Fellowship Hall
- For those taking part in the new women's ministry led by Pastor Deb, may it connect us with God and one another

Prayers for our World:

- For our nation as it begins the long process of electing leaders in the fall, may we be given God's wisdom, strength and fortitude
- For civilians caught in bloody conflict in Israel and Gaza who are always the ones who suffer in times of war, may a new way forward be found to bring lasting peace
- For those leading and helping plan Earth Fest on April 20 at UWRF, may it drive home our need to be better stewards of God's gift of this good creation
- For those fighting cancer and those working to find a cure, may your efforts be fruitful

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For the gift of our recent warm weather, may we revel in it while we can
- For those who helped serve at the funeral lunches for Neal Prochnow and Dorothy Sorensen, you are angels, bless you
- For our custodian Farnum Fuller who has been putting in lots of hours getting our building ready for its many events, celebrations and recent funerals
- For those joining the two cooking classes led by Peter Kwong, may we be fed in body and soul
- For the gift of this congregation and its leaders as we gather for our Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 4
- For our choir as they participate in the It Takes a Village Choir Concert on Sunday, February 25 at 4pm which is back for the first time in many years

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Neal Prochnow who died peacefully at home and whose Memorial Service was Friday, January 26 here at church, may he be given eternal rest and peace and his family comforted
- For the family of Dorothy Sorensen whose Memorial Service was Saturday, January 21 here at church, may she rest from her labors
- For the Krueger family mourning Bill, the Alexander family mourning Dick, the Carrison family mourning Dahn, the Johnson family mourning Steve, the Peterson family mourning Sheila, the Olson family mourning Bill, the Koosmann family mourning Sue, may you be strengthened through the care of others

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

Announcements

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

Loving God

New to Church: Are you a first-time visitor? Please stop at the welcome table in the gathering area to receive a special welcome gift from us!

Sunday Morning Text Study: Join us each Sunday morning, **9:00–9:50**, to explore the scripture texts used in that Sunday's worship. Participating in this discussion is a great way to prepare for worship.

Adult Bible Study meets on **Wednesdays from 1:00–2:30 pm**. The group is reading and discussing Bernhard Anderson's *The Unfolding of the Bible*. Copies are available for \$18.00 in the church office. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Ash Wednesday and Evening Lenten Worship: Ash Wednesday worship will be on Wednesday, February 14, 6:30–7:30 pm in the sanctuary. We will gather together on Wednesday evenings during Lent for Prayer Around the Cross simple services. Wednesday Evening Worship will be on Wednesdays February 21, 28 and March 6, 13, and 20. Please plan to attend!

Loving Neighbor

Please Save Small Things! Please save small things for an upcoming Christian Education Event called "Tiny Town." Children will use small objects to create small things and places. The greater variety of objects we have, the greater the opportunity for the children to be creative. Please save and bring to office things such as: small cardboard boxes, jewelry boxes, small metal candy containers, empty spools of thread, lengths of ribbon, buttons, keys, old game pieces, etc.

Save Eye Glasses and Cheaters: Members of First Covenant Church will travel to Ecuador for a mission trip. They hope to bring eye glasses with them to help address a significant need in the community for glasses. Please bring eye glasses to donate to the project to the church office by the end of February.

First Church Companions: The "**Companions**" meet quarterly to support each other, help new companions learn about this role, and discuss questions. If you are willing to visit with someone in our church community and connect at least once a month with a call or visit, please sign-up. If you are interested in receiving regular visits or recommending someone who might appreciate visits, there is also a line on the same sign-up sheet for "**Buddies.**" Contact Pastor Deb or Lu Lueck with questions.

Among Friends is a community-based social respite program serving adults who have memory loss who reside in Pierce and St. Croix Counties. For more information, contact them at (715) 293-2561. Check out the website: amongfriendsrf.com and Facebook page. It is held at the church on **Tuesdays 9am to 3pm**.

Loving Self

Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of the congregation is **TODAY** in the Fellowship Hall starting at about 11:15 am. In addition to receiving reports, passing budgets & electing officers, we will also hear ministry updates from many of our teams & committees, hear an update about Pastor Stacy's summer sabbatical & the Lilly Grant awarded to the church, as well as a proposal from the Green Team to be more sustainable. Join us!

New Hymnals: The new hymnals are here! We hope to have them labeled and in the pews soon. If you have not paid for your hymnals please do so this week!

Connecting Through Cooking: The next two cooking classes with Peter Kwong in our church kitchen will be Tuesday, February 13 (Thai) and Tuesday, February 27 (Mexican). The cost is \$30 and we ask for you to pay for your spot before class. Sign-up on the table or online.

Wednesday Family Meals: Beginning **Ash Wednesday, February 14**, we will again offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$9 per person with a family max of \$30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:00 pm.** You can get your meal to go if you go through the line (indicate when you sign up). **Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays.** You can make a reservation online, the sign-up table or by calling the church office. Menu for Feb 14 is lasagna and chicken alfredo, salad, garlic toast.

Shrimp Boil: The Shrimp Boil Fundraiser for the Back Bay Mission Trip will be held **Wednesday, March 13 at 5:15 pm.** Please get your tickets in advance Sundays or call/stop by the church office. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for kids (5-12) and free for 4 and under.

Yarn and More: We have an abundance of yarn and other supplies in the Gathering Area. Please take what you can use. The yarn is sorted by colors and thickness. Have fun creating new projects!

Women's Group: Interested in fellowship and community with other women? Pastor Deb invites you to join her every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. Please bring a sack lunch. The next meetings will be **Feb 13 & 27.**

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, Feb 21 at 1:00 pm at Table on Main in River Falls.** All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

Men's Group: The group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am** for coffee, treats & conversation. Next meetings are **Feb 13 & 27.** Join us! Talk to Pastor Chris for more information.

Earth Fest Planning: Do you have any ideas on increasing awareness of sustainability or practicing wellness? We are looking for a few people to help plan our Earth Fest presentation and we'd like to start meeting in late January. We are also looking for helpers at the event on April 20th. Sign-ups for both volunteer opportunities are located on the sign-up table. See Pastor Deb or Sally Steneman for details.

Let's Knit Together: Calling all who knit, crochet or have a craft that can be brought to church or want to learn. Join us **Thursdays at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall.** We have a great time sharing our projects & enjoying each other's company. Questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or fristroe@gmail.com

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 **February 12.**

Youth Events

Hold the Dates: Summer Activities: As you plan for 2024, please keep in mind this coming summer's Vacation Bible School program and the Children's Summer Musical. We will need students and volunteers. Registration forms are available in the church office. Please invite friends and neighbors to participate. VBS will be July 29–August 1, 9:00–11:30 am. The Children's Musical will be August 19–22, 9:00 am–Noon.

Sign Ups

Coffee Fellowship Hosts Needed: Please sign up to help host and serve. Everything you need is provided, you just need to get there a little early to get things ready, serve and do a quick clean up.

Liturgists Needed: Please sign up to be a Sunday liturgist. You will lead us in the Call to Worship and a Scripture text. The bulletin will be sent via email to you on Thursday.

Welcomers Needed: Please sign up to be a welcomer on Sunday morning before worship. One person at the bottom of the stairs & one person at the ramp entrance. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to the service.

Altar Table Flowers: Please sign up to provide flowers for the altar for Sunday worship.

NOTES

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Isaiah 40:25-31

To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God'? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 1:35-39

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.