

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

May 26, 2024



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

May 26, 2024

Trinity Sunday

9:30 am

Gathering

"A life without love is like a year without summer."
- A Swedish Proverb

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today!

- 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.
- Please note our worship service is livestreamed.

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: Let us worship God!

P: Creator, Holy One, Sovereign God, Maker of heaven and earth.

L: Let us worship God!

P: Jesus Christ, God-with-us, Savior, Brother, Lord.

L: Let us worship God!

P: Holy Spirit, Tongues of fire, a rushing wind, a still, small voice.

L: God is holy, three-in-one!

All: Come let us worship the triune God!

***HYMN**

All Creatures of Our God and King

Blue #23

Verses 1, 2, 3 and 4

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Triune God, we confess that we have fallen short of your call for us. Instead of caring for the gift of this glorious creation, we have taken it for granted, even harmed it with our actions. Instead of loving our neighbors as ourselves as our Savior commands, we have erected walls. And instead of feeling the winds of your Holy Spirit pulsing through ourselves, we have remain silent. Forgive us. Renew us. Set us again on your path. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Hear the words of Psalm 103:

P: **"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

L: God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

P: **For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is God's steadfast love toward those who trust God."**

L: This is good news!

P: **Let us embrace and live this good news. Amen.**

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 (Sung twice)

*Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah
Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Hallelujah, Hal-le-lu-jah*

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Romans 8:12-17

PSALM 29 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)



The Lord will bless his peo-ple with peace.

L: Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

P: **Ascribe to the LORD the glory of God's name; worship the LORD in holy splendor.**

L: The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty waters.

P: **The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.**

L: The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

P: **He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. R**

L: The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

P: **The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

L: The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in the temple all say, "Glory!"

P: **The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as Lord forever.**

L: May the LORD give strength to God's people!

P: **May the LORD bless God's people with peace! R**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

John 3:1-17

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!

Blue #136

Verses 1, 2 and 4

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – African Creed**

We believe in the one High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. God created the human person for happiness in the world. God loves the world and every nation and tribe on the earth. We have known this High God in the darkness, and now we know God in the light.

God promised in the Scriptures to save the world and all the nations and tribes. We believe that God kept all promises by sending Jesus Christ, a person in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left his home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and humankind, showing that the meaning of religion is love. Jesus was rejected by his people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross, and died. He lay buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch him, and on the third day, he rose from the grave.

We believe that all our sins are forgiven by God. We accept the gift of baptism and in the community of faith we live in ways of love and share the bread of life. We announce the good news to all people so long as God gives us breath. We believe that the Spirit is in the world and that God cares for us in life and in death. This we believe. 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.

***DOXOLOGY**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Holy and Gracious God, **you are the One who creates us, the Christ who redeems us, the Holy Spirit who fills us with hope. May we be instruments of your purpose here on earth. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

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: Come people of God, let us sing!

P: **Let us sing for we are God's people and God has done wonderful things.**

L: Let us come into God's presence with joy and thanksgiving.

P: **Let us come into God's presence and let God feed us on the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing. Come Holy Spirit, come!**

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 remember 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:

Lead Me, Guide Me

Congregation join on refrain:

***Lead me, guide me, along the way,
For if you lead me, I cannot stray.
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.
Lead me, oh Lord, lead me.***

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior

Congregation join on refrain:

***Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry;
While on others you are calling,
do not pass me by.***

Be Thou My Vision

Blue #502

Nothing Can Trouble

***Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.
God alone fills us.***

Prayer of Thanksgiving

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.

Sending

***HYMN**

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Blue #48

Verses 1, 2 and 3

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Traci Hagberg
Deacons: Cindy Gandrud, Karen Lloyd,
Laura Anderson, Jena Most,
Marshall Skule
Organist: Terry Mithun
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Dan Rude
Coffee
Fellowship: Marg Downing
Counters: Roz Ostendorf, Diane Welsh

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Christopher Myers
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers
Community &
Outreach Pastor: Deb Meyer
Youth Minister: 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

	<u>May 19, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,578	\$ 237,577
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 209,260

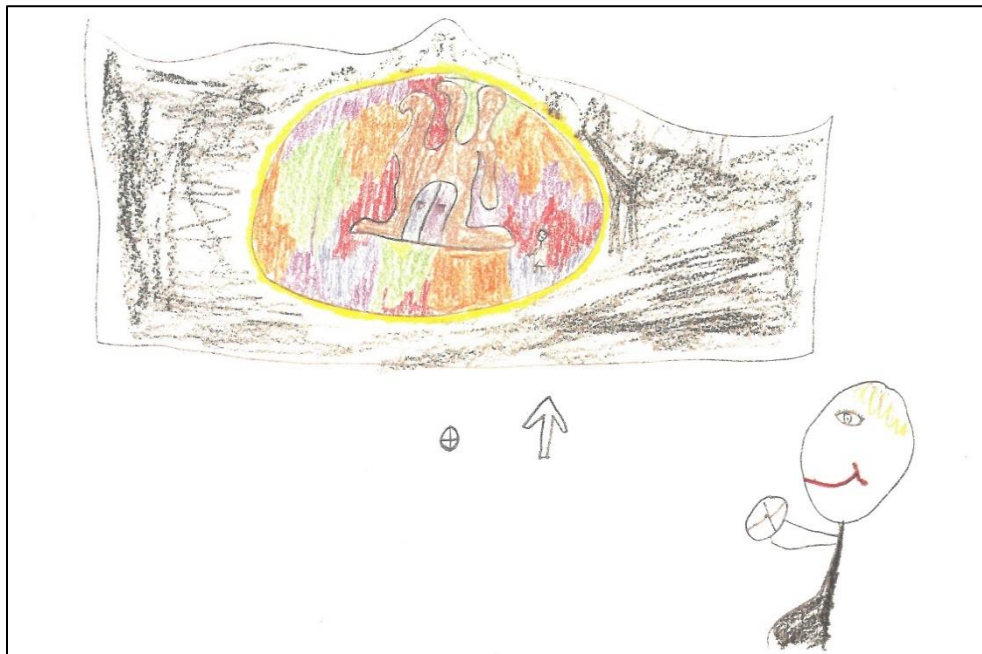
A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.



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2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click the tab 'Give Online'



The Planet
Where God
Lives from
the book
*Spiritual Lives
of Children*
by Robert
Coles

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Carsten (grandson of Duane Church), Sue Taylor, Melissa Oscanyan (friend of Ann Nelson), Glenn Kees, Linda (daughter of Chuck White), Jeff (brother-in-law of Janice Healy), Joe (Christina Krueger's brother)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For High School Seniors and their families getting ready for Graduation Sunday on June 2nd, may it be a time of celebration and new beginnings
- For our choir and bell choir members and leaders, and our Sunday School teachers, who all had a great season which concluded last Sunday, God bless you all and enjoy your summer break!
- For those who went to Moon Beach to get our church camps ready for the year including Randy Welsh, Tim Bylander, Dan Rude and Carol Merriman, may God bless your efforts
- For those recently confirmed, Marshall Friese, Maranda Herum and Alex Korent, may they may grow in love, faith and joy
- For Pastor Stacy as she continues her sabbatical, may it feed her in body, mind and soul

Prayers for our World:

- For our veterans and all those who died in service to our country as we celebrate Memorial Day, may we remember their sacrifice
- For those cleaning up after spring storms, may God's love be visible through your neighbors
- For ANYONE who has to cross the I-94 bridge in Hudson, especially commuters, may they be given patience beyond their own ability
- 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 working to care for the gift of God's good creation

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For Lily Rachel, new granddaughter of Maxine and Tom Sitz, born to Rachel and Dan, may she grow in age and wisdom
- For Rev. Roger Kampstra as he celebrates the 60th anniversary of his graduation from Wartburg Seminary!
- For our baptism boom which is now at 9 children of God in 5 months including Evie Pearson (Mike and Justine) baptized Jan 14, Hope Withers (Erik and Vanessa) baptized Feb 25, Laney Sitz (Heather and Dan) baptized March 3, Nora Koecher (Dan and Mari) baptized on March 10, and four Thompson children (Talia, Orion, Oliver, Tova) baptized May 5, and Dean Wilhelmy (Heidi and Mason) baptized May 19, may they all grow in love and faith!

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the Knutson family as they mourn the death of Debbie, mother of Josh, at her Memorial Service on Saturday, June 1, that they may receive the peace of Christ
- For the Hoopman family mourning Carole, the Carrison family mourning Dahn, the Rausch family mourning Bill, the Fosmo family mourning Harold, the Prochnow family mourning Neal, 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!

Graduation Sunday and Scholarships Awarded—June 2: We will bless our graduating high school seniors and award church scholarships during the **one summer 9:30 am worship service on June 2**. High school seniors, please wear your graduation robe to worship. And those who submitted scholarships for high school graduation, continuing education or spiritual growth should be present so they can receive their awards. A reception in honor of the high school graduates will follow during Coffee Fellowship. Join us!

The Lord's Prayer Bible Study: You know it. Maybe memorized it. But have you ever really thought about what it means? Or how it can impact your prayer life? On **Tuesdays, June 4, 11, 18 and 25, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm**, Pastor Deb will lead a four-part interactive study on The Lord's Prayer, based on the book "Praying the Lord's Prayer" by Elmer L. Towns. Deepen your personal experience of The Lord's Prayer by joining us! Open to all men & women. Please sign up.

Loving Neighbor

Strengthen the Church Offering: Each year around Pentecost Sunday, the congregations of the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ receive the Strengthen the Church offering, an important expression of the generosity of people across the UCC. Your gifts will be shared equally by the Conference and national setting to support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovations in UCC congregations. Please consider as you are able to support this ministry. Today is the last Sunday for receiving gifts.

Diaper Drive: Each Sunday between Mother's Day & Father's Day, we are collecting diapers and wipes for local families in need. Last year folks in our church donated over 5,100 diapers and as of today we have 2,912. What a wonderful way to honor our parents, support those in need locally, and be vehicles of God's grace and compassion.

Scarves, Mittens, & Hats: Join our knitting group by making scarves, mittens and/or hats for school age children. We are supporting Basics for Local Kids in Pierce & St. Croix counties. You can make items at home from yarn, fleece or wool or join us on Thursdays at 10 am. If you have questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103.

First Church Companions: The "**Companions**" meet quarterly to support each other, help new companions, 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, 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

Women's Group: Join us **Tues, May 28, 12:00-2:00 pm**, for an outing to the MN Carpenter Center to view the gardens. The Peony Garden will be in full bloom. Please bring a sack lunch for a picnic. Meet at the church to carpool. Please sign up.

Game Day Sunday will be **June 23** following Coffee Fellowship. Please sign up.

Summer Choir: The UCC Chancel Choir will be performing 3 Sundays this summer: **June 16, July 21, and August 25!** If you're interested in a low-stakes singing opportunity, please join us! This is your chance to sing without committing to the year's schedule. We rehearse one hour before the service! All are welcome!

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, June 19 at 1:00 pm at Azul Tequila in Hudson.** All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

“WISE” Corner - Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaging - for Mental Health and Wellness: Thank you to those who attended the Learning Community event “In Our Own Voice.” We learned how the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) works to reduce the stigma around mental illness by providing a safe space for people to talk about their struggles. We heard how talking about mental health issues is the first step toward getting support, coping & moving toward recovery. NAMI holds a support group at Luther Memorial on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month at 6:30 pm. **May is Mental Health Awareness Month.** We can celebrate this month by prioritizing self-care, checking in with loved ones and those around us, and raising awareness about mental health challenges.

Softball News: Our church sponsors a softball team in the River Falls Church Family League. The family league is a co-ed division allowing players to play at the age 14 and requires teams to have three women on the field at all times. The games are played on Monday evenings at Hoffman Park and will begin the first Monday after Memorial Day and continue until the middle of August. Any questions, contact Sarah Plum at (715)418-9393 or Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman234b@gmail.com.

VBS Volunteers: Please volunteer to help with Vacation Bible School! We need adult and teen workers. VBS will be July 29–August 1, 9:00–11:30 am. Pastor Stacy will be back for VBS. Please sign up at church or online.

Men’s Group: The group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am** for coffee, treats & conversation. Next meeting is **June 4** before we take a summer break. Talk to Pastor Chris for more information.

Let’s Knit Together: Calling all who have a craft that can be brought to church. 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 firstroe@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.

Youth Events

Day Trip to the Cities for Grades 6-12: Alex is planning a fun-filled day in the Twin Cities visiting various locations based on group interest! You are welcome to invite a friend or two as we will travel in style in our church van. Dates will be determined based on group availability. Please fill out the Day Trip to the City Interest form online or email/text Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com or 612-224-5894.

Late Summer Youth Retreat for Grades 6-12: Alex is planning a Retreat to the Metropolis Resort and Action City! Our goal is to find two days between July 26-Aug 10. Once we have a strong group signed up, we will make reservations and plan around the group's interests! You are welcome to invite a friend! Male & female parents/chaperones are requested. Pricing will be determined soon but will be reduced for church members with the youth fund. Please fill out the Interest form online or email/text Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com or 612-224-5894.

Vacation Bible School: Children age 3 through completed grade 5 are invited to Vacation Bible School. The theme is *Christian Art: Stop, Look, Listen* and will feature Bible study, children’s literature, Christian art and architecture, music, and an engaging variety of art projects from painting to felting. VBS is free and open to all community children. Registration forms are online or at church. Dates are **July 29–August 1, 9:00–11:30 am.**

Summer Children’s Musical: Children who have completed grades 1-6 are invited to produce the musical *Rescue in the Night: The Story of Daniel in the Lions’ Den.* Rehearsals include singing, learning lines, and working on the set and props. The show will be on Thursday evening. All are welcome and there is no charge. Registration forms are online or at church. Dates: **August 19-22, 9:00 am–Noon for Rehearsals and August 22, 6:30 pm for Dinner and the Show.**

Join us
FOR A FREE CONCERT
on the lawn

July 11th
6-8 PM
110 N 3RD ST. RIVER FALLS

WITH
Slapdash
BLUEGRASS
Band

food for purchase by
AND ROLLIN' RIVER FOOD TRUCK

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SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 8:12-17

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, “You must be born from above.” The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can these things be?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? ‘Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.