


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

July 14, 2024

And you also
were included
in Christ
when
you heard
the word of
truth.



Ephesians 1:13

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

July 14, 2024

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

To have Christian hope means to know about evil and yet to go to meet the future with confidence. The core of faith rests upon accepting being loved by God, and therefore to believe is to say Yes, not only to God, but to creation, to creatures, above all, to our fellow creatures, to try to see the image of God in each person and thereby to become a lover. That's not easy, but the basic Yes, the conviction that God has created us, that God stands behind us, that we are not simply negative, gives love a reference point that enables us to ground hope on the basis of faith.

- Pope Benedict XVI

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

Slapdash Bluegrass Band

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: God is waiting for us.

P: With a graceful heart and a passion to love.

L: God is ready for us.

P: With truth and wisdom from a deep well.

L: God is blessing us.

P: With the bread of life and the cup of blessing.

L: God is sending us.

P: To love, serve and be the body of Christ at work in the world.

All: Come let us worship the God who leads us into abundant life!

***HYMN**

Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

Black #459

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, you call us to be salt and light and to live as your holy people. We want to, God, but we fall short! We confess that there is good and bad, light and dark within our own hearts. We want to do what is right, but our fears and anxieties lead us to self-protection rather than service to neighbor, to hoarding rather than freely sharing, to self-righteousness rather than compassion. Forgive us, O God. By your mercy, restore us that we might be your faithful people. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Listen to this good news:

P: **God is always present to us, even when we are not present to God.**

L: The love of God never lets us go, even when we let go of God.

P: **In Christ we are forgiven and set free for service in his name.**

All: **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

Glory, glory hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down.

Glory, glory hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down.

I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down.

I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Ephesians 1:3-12

PSALM 85:8-13 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

Response

Antiphon: Carolyn Jennings, 1994

Chords: Eb Unison, Bb/D, Cm, Gm/Bb, Abadd6, Ab, Eb

Lyrics: Show us your stead-fast love, O God, and grant us your sal - va - tion.

L: Let me hear what God will speak, for God will speak peace to God's people, to those who turn to God in their hearts.

P: **Surely God's salvation is at hand for those who trust in God, that God's glory may dwell in our land.**

L: Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

P: Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

L: The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

P: Righteousness will go before God, and will make a path for God's steps. **R**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 6:14-29

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

I'll Fly Away

1 Some glad morn-ing when this life is o'er, I'll fly a-way;
2 When the shad-ows of this life have gone, fly a-way, fly a-way;
3 Just a few more wea-ry days and then,

to a home on God's ce-les-tial shore, I'll fly a-way.
Like a bird from pris-on bars has flown, fly a-way, fly a-way.
To a land where joys shall nev-er end,

Refrain
I'll fly a-way, O glo-ry, I'll fly a-way;
fly a-way, fly a-way, in the morn-ing;

When I die, hal-le-lu-jah, by and by, I'll fly a-way.
fly a-way, fly a-way.

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – from the Iona Ecumenical Community in Scotland**

L: Let us affirm our faith.

P: We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of the One God, maker and sustainer of earth, sea and sky. Born of Mary, faithful to the God of Abraham and Sarah, Jesus healed the sick, served the poor, and proclaimed heaven on earth. Condemned by the religious, crucified by the state, He died but transformed even death and rose to life everlasting. He blessed the disciples with his Holy Spirit and sent them forth, east and west, north and south. We commit ourselves to Jesus, to one another as brothers and sisters and to the grace of the Holy Spirit. 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

Slapdash Bluegrass Band

***DOXOLOGY**

Refrain

Great is your faith-ful-ness! Great is your faith-ful-ness! Morn-ing by
morn-ing new mer-cies I see; All I have need-ed your
hand has pro-vid-ed, Great is your faith-ful-ness, God, un-to me!

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

O God, let us praise you, not just with our voices, but with our actions. Not just with our hearts, but with our hands. Even by our giving, may we praise you, O God. Accept these gifts and use them for your glory. 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: 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 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:

Shall We Gather at the River

Congregation join on refrain:

***Yes, we'll gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river,
gather with the saints at the river that flows by the throne of God.***

Guide My Feet

Black #497

Over My Head

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain

O-ver my head, I hear mu-sic in the air; o-ver my head,
I hear mu-sic in the air; o-ver my head, I hear
mu-sic in the air; there must be a God some-where.

Verses

Cantor: 1. Oh when the world is si-lent, oh
2. And when I'm feel-ing lone-ly, I hear mu-sic in the air; and
3. Now when I think on Je-sus, now

Assembly: when the world is si-lent, oh
when I'm feel-ing lone-ly, I hear mu-sic in the air; and
when I think on Je-sus, now

Assembly: when the world is si-lent,
when I'm feel-ing lone-ly, I hear mu-sic in the air;
when I think on Je-sus,

All: there must be a God some-where. **D.C.**

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**

Soon and Very Soon

Blue #523

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

Slapdash Bluegrass Band

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Ginny Larson
Deacons: Laura Anderson, Traci Hagberg,
Marshall Skule
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Ryan Luedtke
Trustee: Jane Truesdill
Coffee
Fellowship: Kampstra Family
Welcomers: JoAnn Lentz, Julie Bauer
Counters: Janice Healy, Trish Graves
*Altar flowers are given in celebration of
Roger and Joyce Kampstra's 60th wedding
anniversary.*

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>July 7, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,080	\$ 284,204
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 282,501

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.



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:

Sue Taylor, Melissa Oscanyan (friend of Ann Nelson), Linda (daughter of Chuck White), Jeff (brother-in-law of Janice Healy), Doris (sister-in-law of Bonnie Jones Witthuhn), Rose Rude, Ruth Anne White, Becca Greub (daughter of Lou Greub), Dennis Kiel, Lynn Most and Tom Simonet (relatives of Sue Simonet), Donna Brunbage (sister of JoAnn Mathews), Josh and Tim (church softball team players)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our Wisconsin Conference UCC who gathered for their annual meeting June 7-9 in Green Lake, that along with our delegates Pastor Deb and Carol Merriman, they may grow in love, justice and grace
- For our Music Committee who hosted the Slapdash Bluegrass Band on the church lawn as part of River Falls Days on Thursday, July 11 from 6-8pm, what a great event!
- For our Among Friends ministry to families with dementia as they expanded to welcome guests on Tuesdays and now also on Thursdays, may they be an oasis of grace
- For those getting ready for VBS (July 29 to Aug 1) and the Youth Musical (Aug 19-22), may they help us grow in the love of Christ
- For Pastor Stacy as she continues her final week of sabbatical, may it feed her in body, mind and soul

Prayers for our World:

- For the FMSC mobile packing event coming to River Falls on September 11-12, that our community may be bound together and demonstrate the love of Jesus in word and action
- For those who are part of Nami's Family Support Group and the burdens they carry
- 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 those who will benefit from the Blood Drive held in our Fellowship Hall this past Thursday, may it give others the gift of life
- For local families benefiting from the diaper drive sponsored by our Mission Team as a way to honor our parents, together we contributed over 7000 diapers!
- For Joyce and Roger Kampstra who celebrated their 60th anniversary July 11, may your love continue to grow!
- For Bonnie and Dick Jones Witthuhn who celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary Saturday, August 10th, may God continue to grace you with gratitude and grace
- For Ruth Anne White as she celebrated her 94th birthday on July 13th, congratulations!

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the Dopkins family mourning Wesley, Knutson family mourning Debbie, 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!

Loving Neighbor

Simpson Shelter Meal Volunteers Needed: It's time for our summer picnic meal at the Simpson Shelter. The date is **Wednesday, July 17**. A sign-up sheet is on the gathering table. Please sign up to help prepare food in our kitchen or serve at the shelter. Thank you!

Save The Date! Feed My Starving Children is coming to River Falls! Thanks to a wonderful partnership of churches, individuals and businesses, including First Congregational Church, please mark your calendars for **Wednesday and Thursday, September 11 and 12**, when our community will pack 100,000 meals at Tattersall. Sign-ups will begin the end of July. Thank you to our Endowment Grant Team who granted \$3,000 to help pay for the \$30,000 cost of packing these meals. Exciting!

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 and St. Croix counties. 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 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 and Thursdays 9am to 3pm.**

Loving Self

Peaches: It's time to place your order for the delicious Washington State Peaches! 1 single-layer box is \$24.00; 2 or more single-layer boxes are \$23.00 each. **Orders must be placed by July 29 for pick up the 2nd or 3rd week of August.** There are 3 ways to order: 1. Email: office@firstchurchrf.org; 2. Sign up at church or online; 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!

Summer Choir: The UCC Chancel Choir will be performing 2 more Sundays this summer: **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!

Softball News: Our next games are July 15 at 7:45 pm vs. Servant of the Shepherd and July 22 at 6:30 pm vs. Abundant Life at Hoffman Park. Come join in the fun, laughs, and family togetherness whether you are playing or cheering for the team. If you have questions, contact Sarah Plum at (715) 418-9393 or Deb Hoffman at (612) 308-4945.

VBS Backdrop Painting: Please volunteer to help paint the backdrops for VBS. The big painting day with the artist will be **Tuesday, July 16, starting at 6:00 pm**. Excellent artistic skills are *not* required. Rather, the ability to paint inside the lines is the name of the game. Please sign up.

VBS Volunteers: Thanks to everyone who has volunteered to help with VBS 2024. We do still need a large number of additional adult and teen workers. VBS will be July 29–August 1, 9:00–11:30 am. To volunteer, please sign up.

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, July 17 at 4:00 pm at St. Croix Lanes in River Falls**. All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

Women's Group: Interested in fellowship and community with other women? Pastor Deb invites you to join her at noon every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. Please bring a sack lunch. The next meetings will be **July 23 and August 13 & 27**.

Let's Knit Together: Calling all who knit, crochet, or have a craft that can be brought to church. Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall**. We have a great time sharing our current projects and enjoying each other's company. Any 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.

WISE Corner: NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group will be held **Thursdays at 6:30 pm at the River Falls Public Library**. For more information, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

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 Thursday evening. All are welcome & there is no charge. Registration forms are online or at church. Dates: **Aug 19-22, 9:00 am–Noon for Rehearsals & Aug 22, 6:30 pm for Dinner & the Show**.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Ephesians 1:3-12

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 6:14-29

King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, 'John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him.' But others said, 'It is Elijah.' And others said, 'It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.' But when Herod heard of it, he said, 'John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.'

For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.' And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it.' And he solemnly swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom.' She went out and said to her mother, 'What should I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the baptizer.' Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, 'I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.' The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.