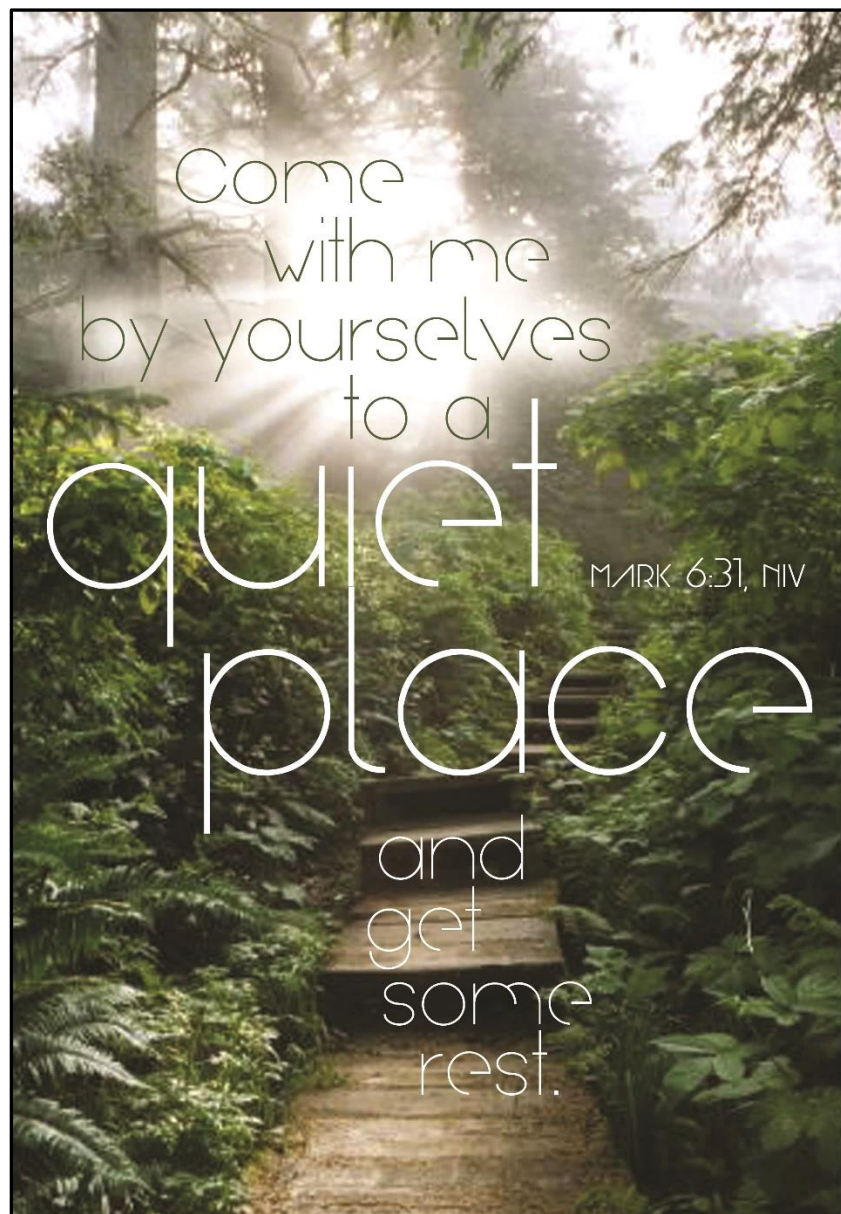


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

July 21, 2024



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

July 21, 2024

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

Our human compassion binds us the one to the other - not in pity or patronizingly,
but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering
into hope for the future.

- Nelson Mandela

<p>Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>As Jesus' courageous disciples, living God's grace, we strive to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Worship faithfully</i>- <i>Welcome openly</i>- <i>Grow spiritually</i>- <i>Care passionately</i>- <i>Serve generously</i>
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GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

- L: Come away with me to a quiet place, apart from the world and its frantic pace.
- P: Come away to pray and reflect.**
- L: Come away to take stock of your life and listen to God's quiet voice.
- P: Come away to count your blessings and remind yourself of what really matters.**
- L: Come away to rest, renew and recharge.
- P: Come away to be in the presence of God.**
- All: Together let us follow in the steps of Jesus as he leads us into abundant life!**
- P: Come away with me. Come away.**

*HYMN

All You Works of God

Refrain

All you works of God, ev-'ry moun - tain, star and tree, bless the One
 who shapes your beau - ty, who has caused you all to be one great
 song of love and grace, ev - er an - cient, ev - er new. Raise your
 voic - es, all you works of God!

Verses

1. Sun and moon:	Stars of heav - en:	
2. Winds of God:	Cold and win - ter:	
3. Night and day:	Light and dark - ness:	
4. All the earth:	Bless your Mak - er!	Hills and moun - tains:
5. Wells and springs:	Seas and riv - ers:	
6. Fly - ing birds:	Beasts and cat - tle:	
7. All who live:	Men and wom - en:	

Chant your praise!	Show - ers and dew:
	Snow - storms and ice:
	Light - nings and clouds:
	Green things that grow:
	Whales in the deep:
	Chil - dren at play:
	Ser - vants of God:

Raise up your joy - ful song.

D.C.

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy God, we confess that in our busyness, we often ignore each other as human beings. We have errands to do, work to do and problems to solve. Pulled in so many directions, we allow ourselves to think our to-do lists are more important than our relationships. Remind us acts of ministry are possible in every encounter. Forgive us for the times when we have been short with each other, or have treated someone as less than our equal. Show to us the face of the risen Christ in each person. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Just as Jesus reached out in compassion to touch and heal the sick of every kind,

P: **God reaches out in compassion to heal us of our sin.**

L: Let us embrace the peace and forgiveness of our God. 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

1 Thessalonians 5:15-20

PSALM 23 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

Refrain

Shep-herd me, O God, be - yond my wants, be -
yond my fears, from death in - to life.

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 6:30-44

***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.

*DOXOLOGY

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

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Loving God, we give these gifts with joy and thanksgiving. We pray that you will bless them on their way to do the work of the church in this place, in this community, and far beyond. May these gifts go with your blessing to build up your peoples, to give hope and joy and love. 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:

Blessed Are They

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain *All*

Re - jice and be glad! Bless - ed are you;
ho - ly are you! Re - jice and be glad!
Yours is the king - dom of God!

You Are Mine

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain

Do not be a - fraid, I am with you. I have called you
each by name. Come and fol - low me, I will bring you
home; I love you and you are mine. D.C.

In the Lord

***In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice!
Look to God, do not be afraid; lift up your voices, the Lord is near;
lift up your voices, the Lord is near.***

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**

I Sing the Almighty Power of God

Blue #31

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Rebecca Ferguson
Deacons: Karen Lloyd, Cindy Gandrud,
Lance Lueck, Traci Hagberg,
Marshall Skule
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Jeff Hoffman
Coffee
Fellowship: Laura and Mark Anderson
Welcomers: Norma Revels, Bobbie Kuhn
Counters: Diane Welsh, Marie Roe
*Altar flowers are given in celebration of
Glenn and Jan Hansen's 40th 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 14, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 8,864	\$ 302,388
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 292,964

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, Becca Greub (daughter of Lou Greub), Dennis Kiel, Lynn Most and Tom Simonet (relatives of Sue Simonet), Josh and Tim (church softball team players), Kurt Helmrick, Kate Kirkwood

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those who served a picnic dinner at the Simpson Homeless Shelter in Minneapolis this past Wednesday, may we all be blessed and fed
- For those who helped to paint VBS sets this past Tuesday night, you are angels of grace!
- For our Music Committee who hosted the Slapdash Bluegrass Band on the church lawn as part of River Falls Days last Thursday, what a great event!
- For our Among Friends ministry to families with dementia as they now expand to welcome guests on Tuesdays and also 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 who returns from sabbatical, may she be rested and renewed

Prayers for our World:

- For our nation as we gear up for elections, that we may refrain from violence, remain peaceful and respectful
- 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 the 111 patients who will receive blood thanks to the recent blood drive at our church, bless you!
- 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 Glenn and Jan Hansen as they celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary, may you celebrate heartily!
- For Bonnie and Dick Jones Witthuhn who celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary Saturday, August 10th, may God continue to grace with you 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 family of Donna Brunbage (sister of JoAnn Mathews) who died suddenly this past week, may God's healing wings surround you and your family
- 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

Tools for School: Once again this year we will be 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 19 and 20** here at church. Typically we serve about 300 students. Thank you for your generous support of this needed local ministry. Please bring donations and place them in the containers in the gathering area. Please also sign up to help sort and distribute items.

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!

Game Day Sunday is TODAY following Coffee Fellowship. Join us!

Summer Choir: The UCC Chancel Choir will be performing 1 more Sunday this summer: **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 22 at 6:30 pm vs. Abundant Life and July 29 at 7:45 pm vs. First Covenant 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 Volunteer Meeting: The VBS volunteer meeting will be **Wed, July 24, 6:30–7:30 pm**. This is the most important chance to prepare for the week. Please plan to attend.

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.

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: 1 Thessalonians 5:15-20

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets.

GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 6:30-44

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.' But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?' And he said to them, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' When they had found out, they said, 'Five, and two fish.' Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled; and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Thanks to those who cooked and served a summer picnic meal
at Simpson Shelter this past week!

