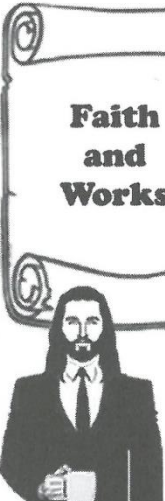

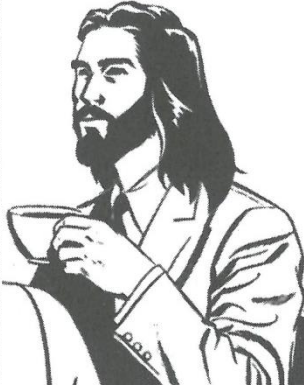

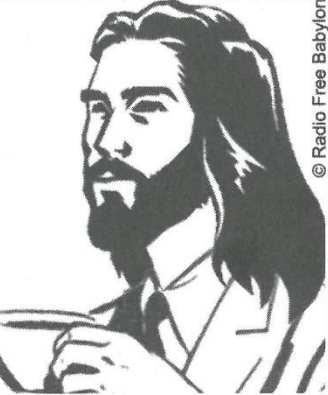
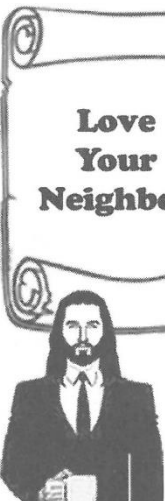

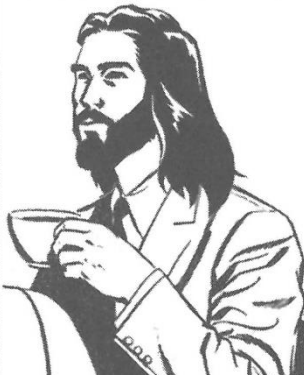

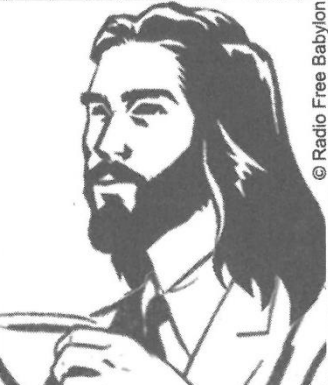




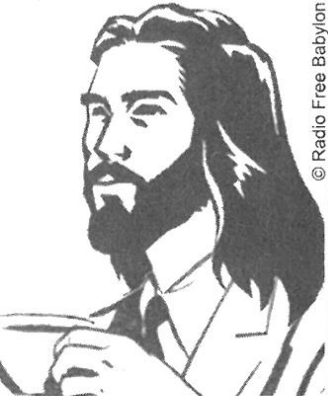


First Congregational United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin
August 25, 2024

 <p>Faith and Works</p>	 <p>The Bible says that "faith without works is dead," Jesus. But in other places it says that faith is all I need.</p>	 <p>You seem to think there's a contradiction, Kevin. Faith will <i>produce</i> works.</p>	 <p>So if I have faith I will just naturally do good works?</p>	 <p>Not naturally. Supernaturally.</p>
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 <p>Love Your Neighbor</p>	 <p>Seems I'm always asking for stuff <i>from</i> you, Jesus, but tell me, how can <i>I</i> serve <i>you</i>?</p>	 <p>I'm thrilled that you asked that, Carl. How about you love your neighbor as yourself?</p>	 <p>OK, but when you say "neighbor," are you talking about the people on my street, or people in Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean?</p>	 <p>Yes.</p>
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 <p>Complete Opposite End</p>	 <p>It's weird, Jesus, but I just met some followers of yours who are on the <i>complete opposite end</i> of the political spectrum from me.</p>	 <p><i>GASP!</i></p>	 <p>Very funny, Jesus...but, I just don't see how they can reconcile their faith with their position on...</p>	 <p>I'll handle the reconciling, Ann. Your job is to love them...or... maybe just not hate them. Baby steps.</p>
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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

August 25, 2024

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

Without Jesus we are stuck with two options: utopian illusion or deadly despair.
I scorn illusion. I dread despair. So I put all my money on Jesus.”
- Lewis Smedes

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: Loving God, you are our gentle Shepherd.

P: We are your people, we long to know your will and to live in your way.

L: Keep us safe and secure in your compassionate hands.

P: Lead us into new paths of love and service.

L: As you lead and guide us, touch our hearts and minds in this worship time,

P: So that our spirits may be refreshed and our lives filled with joy and praise.

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

*HYMN

When in Our Music God is Glorified

Blue #7

Verses 1, 2, 3 and 5

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Merciful God, for the things we have done that we should not have done.

P: Forgive us, Gracious God.

L: And for the things we have left undone.

P: Forgive us, Gracious God.

L: For the things we have said that should have been left unsaid.

P: Forgive us, Gracious God.

L: And for the things we have not said, that should have been said.

P: Forgive us, Gracious God. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Our God does not want us to be trapped by the sins of the past.

P: Jesus comes to free people from their sins and offers them the gift of new life here and now.

L: So let us embrace this gospel truth:

P: In Christ we are forgiven and set free in his name. Amen.

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

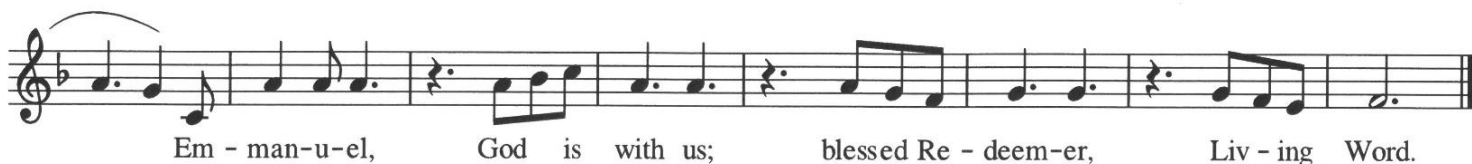
P: And also with you.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

*GLORIA

Jesus, Name Above All Names



Hearing the Word

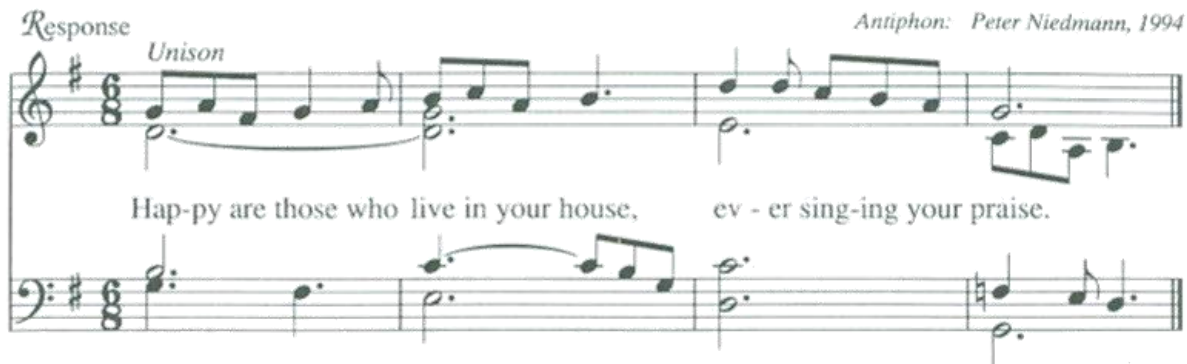
SCRIPTURE LESSON

Ephesians 6:10-20

PSALM 84 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

Response Antiphon: Peter Niedmann, 1994

Unison



Hap-py are those who live in your house, ev - er sing-ing your praise.

L: How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

P: My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

L: Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.

P: Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.

L: Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

P: As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. R

L: They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

P: O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!

L: Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed.

P: For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

L: I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness.

P: For the LORD God is a sun and shield; God bestows favor and honor.

L: No good thing does the LORD withhold from those who walk uprightly.

P: O LORD of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you. R

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

John 6:60-69

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Borning Cry

Blue #680

***STATEMENT OF FAITH—Written by children and used in worship during the World Council of Churches' Seventh Assembly in Canberra, Australia, 1991**

We believe in God who loves us and wants us to love each other.

This is our God.

We believe in Jesus who cared about children and held them in his arms. He wanted a world where everyone could live together in peace.

This is Jesus Christ.

We believe in the Holy Spirit who keeps working with us until everything is good and true.

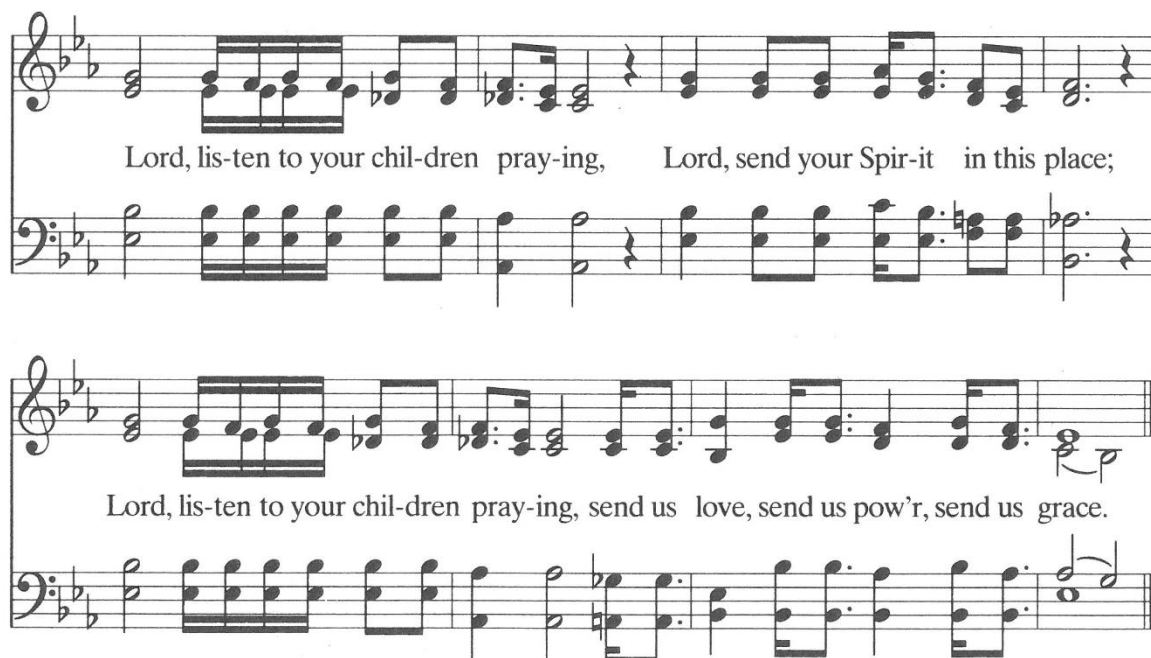
This is the Holy Spirit.

We can be the church which reminds people of God because we love each other.

This we believe. Amen.

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

This is our prayer, O Lord...



Lord, lis-ten to your chil-dren pray-ing, Lord, send your Spir-it in this place;

Lord, lis-ten to your chil-dren pray-ing, send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace.

...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

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Summer Choir

***DOXOLOGY**

We Shall Overcome

***We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
We shall overcome some day!
Oh, deep in my heart I do believe
We shall overcome some day!***

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Loving God, as you have shared life and love with us, lead us to share even more generously our lives and our love. Direct our steps in discipleship and renew our devotion to you so that through your church we might be helpful and generous to a world in great need. 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: Jesus said I am the bread of life. You who come to me shall not hunger; you who believe in me shall never thirst.

P: **In the company of all who are hungry and thirsty, we come to this table to know the risen Christ and to share in the bread of life and cup of blessing.**

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:

You Are My All In All

Congregation join on refrain:



Je - sus, Lamb of God, wor - thy is your name!



Je - sus, Lamb of God, wor - thy is your name!

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.***

Eat This Bread

***Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and never be hungry.
Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.***

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**

Lead Me, Guide Me

Blue #498

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Traci Hagberg
Deacons: Cindy Gandrud, Traci Hagberg,
Karen Lloyd, Marshall Skule,
Jena Most
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Rick Price
Coffee
Fellowship:
Welcomers: Lu Lueck, Julie Bauer
Counters: Marie Roe, Janice Healy

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>Aug 18, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 8,680	\$ 351,225
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 345,279

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'

2024 Youth Musical "Rescue in the Night"



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), Becca Greub (daughter of Lou Greub), Kate Kirkwood (friend of Traci Hagberg), Sarah, Bonnie Jones Witthuhn, Rev. Kurt Katzmar, Larry Bauer, Barb de Souza

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those who participated in the Youth Musical this past week, it was awesome!
- For those who volunteered for Tools for School this past week, may we all have a great school year
- For those who unloaded, sold and bought our peaches for our youth fundraiser, enjoy!
- For our Among Friends ministry to families with dementia as they now welcome guests on Tuesdays and also Thursdays, may they be an oasis of grace and more volunteer helpers
- For those who agreed to be Sunday School teachers this fall, we are thankful for you all!
- For those getting ready for Rally Day on Sunday September 8, may it be a joyous and fun day

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 425 students served at this year's Tools For School program, may they have a great year!
- For the joy of peaches! Eaten! Frozen! And the proceeds go to our Youth Fund! Enjoy!
- For the gift of these final weeks of summer, may we savor them
- For tomatoes (finally) ripening on the vines after all our rain, may we enjoy lots of BLTs!
- For all those signing up to be Sunday School teachers, you are God's angels
- For Bonnie and Dick Jones Witthuhn who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary August 10, may God continue to grace you with gratitude and grace

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Richard (Zeke) Wells who died this past week, may his adult daughters Sarah and Karen be comforted (funeral arrangements are pending at this time)
- 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!

Rally Day – Sun, Sept 8: Rally Day marks the return of our regular program year schedule. The schedule will be: 9:00 am - Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study and Music Practice; 10:00 am - Worship with Sunday School; 11:00 am - Coffee Fellowship.

Fall Worship Series: People of The Way: Sun, Sept 8 - Love Your Neighbors; Sun, Sept - Forgive Others (and Yourself); Sun, Sept 22 - Heal Division; Sun, Sept - Bring Justice

Adult Bible Study Resumes: Wednesday afternoon Adult Bible Study resumes **Sept 11, 1:00–2:30 pm**. The group will read and discuss *Matthew: The Gospel of Promised Blessings*, by Matthew L. Skinner. Copies of the book are available in the office for \$14.00. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

Save The Date! Feed My Starving Children is coming to River Falls! Thanks to a wonderful partnership of churches, individuals & businesses, including First Congregational, please mark your calendars for **Wed & Thurs, Sept 11 & 12**, when our community will pack 100,000 meals at Tattersall. Thank you to our Endowment Grant Team who granted \$3,000 to help pay for the \$30,000 cost of packing these meals.

Red Cross Blood Drive: Join us **Fri, September 13 for the Blood Drive here at church from 11am–5pm**. All donations will help the blood inventory stabilize and ensure patients continue receiving lifesaving blood products. As an added “Thank You!” donors will receive a Red Cross shirt. Go to RedCrossBlood.org to sign up.

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 & St. Croix Counties. For more information, call (715) 293-2561. Check out the website: amongfriendsrf.com & Facebook page. It is held at the church **Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am to 3pm**.

Among Friends Volunteers Needed: The program has expanded to two days a week which means they need more volunteers. Training is provided. They are particularly in need of male volunteers but are willing to receive all. To volunteer, contact the new program coordinator Sarah Schaffner-Dow at amongfriendsrf@gmail.com or talk to Phyllis Meyers or Marshall Skule who are both volunteers.

Loving Self

Mortgage Burning: You read that right. We are burning the church bank mortgage! Join us on **Sunday, September 15** when, after worship, we will gather out on the church lawn to creatively burn our church mortgage leaving us bank debt free! More details to follow.

Attention Parents of College Students! We are collecting addresses of our church kids who are in college so we can send and deliver college packs. Please have them into the church by September 15 so we can get them off on time! Please email them to office@firstchurchrf.org. thank you!

You are invited for “An Evening of Art” on Tues, Sept 24, at 6:30 pm. The primary focus of Stacy's sabbatical trip was to experience and learn about Christian art. She has narrowed down the list of her most favorite pieces to a dozen. She will share a few stories about her adventures, give you a list of things she learned and explore her most favorite pieces of art. Dessert will be included. Please sign up at church or online.

Sunday School Teachers for 2024-25: We are making plans for the beginning of Sunday School. Please volunteer to help. Teachers teach approximately once every three weeks. Sunday School begins again on **September 8**. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy. To volunteer, please sign up at church or online.

Sunday School Teachers Meeting: Sunday School teachers for the 2024-25 school year will gather for an organizational meeting on **Thursday, September 5 from 6:00-7:00 pm.**

Wednesday School Workers Needed: Wednesday School begins on **October 2**. We need adult volunteers, drivers to transport children from school to church, and people to provide snacks. Please consider volunteering. Please sign up at church or online.

Softball News: I am sad to say the softball season is done for 2024. We ended the season with a record of 4 wins, 4 losses and 1 tie. We had a wonderful team who were fun and very supportive of each other. Thank you everyone and I look forward to playing softball with you next summer.

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 is on **September 9**.

Men's Group: Our church men's group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am** in the Youth Room. All men are welcome to join us for coffee, donuts and lively conversation. We gather for an hour and Pastor Chris leads us into a brief discussion. Our next gathering is **Tues, September 10**. Join us!

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 **August 27 and September 10**.

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 is held the **2nd & 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at the River Falls Public Library**. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Youth Events

Fall Confirmation and Church Intern Orientation: Orientation for students in Grades 6-8 will be Sun, Sept 8, following worship. This meeting is ***required*** for confirmands and parents. Orientation for students in Grades 9-12 will be Wed, Sept 18, 6:30-7:30 pm. This meeting is ***required*** for Third Year Confirmands, Church Interns, and parents. Please register all students. Registration forms are available online or in the church office.

Wednesday School: All children who will be in kindergarten through Grade 5 are invited to participate in Wednesday School. Elementary students in River Falls are picked up at the four elementary schools in town at the end of the school day. Wednesday School concludes at 5:15. Registration & permission forms are available at church & online. Wednesday School begins **October 2**. Please contact Pastor Stacy with questions.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Ephesians 6:10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 6:60-69

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'