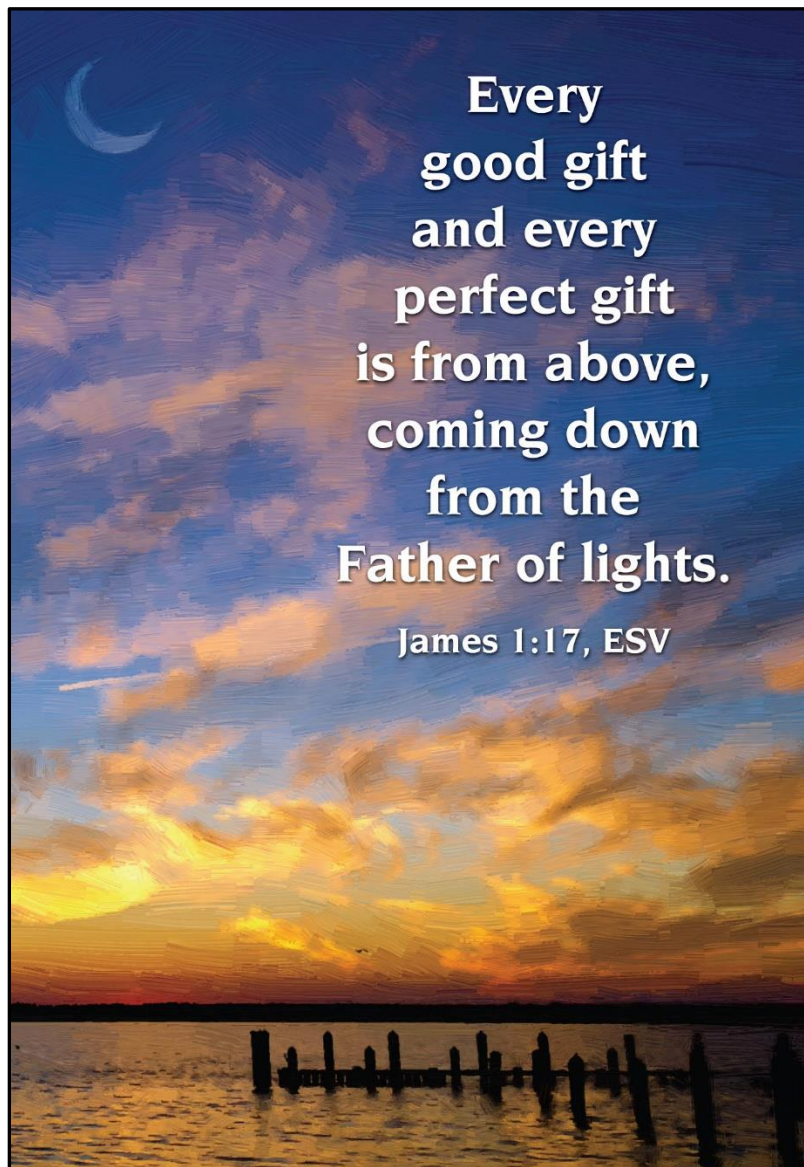


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

September 1, 2024



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

September 1, 2024

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

"Just remember the world is not a playground but a schoolroom.
Life is not a holiday but an education. One eternal lesson for us all:
to teach us how better we should love."

- Barbra Jordan

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: God is like the gentle shepherd,

P: Leading us beyond our wants,

L: Leading us beyond our fears,

P: Leading us to a place of rest,

L: Where we sing the music of great God's love for us and our world,

P: And feel new strength to walk through the valleys and shadows of life.

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

*HYMN

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Blue #71

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Our faith calls us to live our lives courageously and with love. For the times when we have been less faithful disciples, let us now pray:

P: **Merciful God, help us to be more loving in our daily living. If we have been impatient with others, grant us your patience. If we have been unkind in our actions, grant us Christ's love. And if we have been stressed out by the trials of daily living, grant us your peace. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Our God is a God of love and mercy,

P: **Who allows us always to begin again.**

L: By God's grace, we are forgiven to walk in newness of life.

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

He Came Down

*He came down that we may have love; He came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love; hallelujah forever more.*

*He came down that we may have joy; He came down that we may have joy;
He came down that we may have joy; hallelujah forever more.*

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

James 1:17-27

PSALM 15:1-5 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R

Jus-tice a-lone is the way of the
Lord; be just and wor-ship God.

L: O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?

P: **Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart;**

L: Who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;

P: **In whose eyes the wicked are despised, but who honor those who fear the LORD; who stand by their oath even to their hurt;**

L: Who do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent.

P: **Those who do these things shall never be moved. R**

Proclaiming the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Song of Solomon 2:8-13

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

As the Deer

Blue #471

***STATEMENT OF FAITH (from a morning prayer liturgy at Eastern Mennonite Seminary)**

We believe in God:

Whose love is the source of all life and the desire of our lives,

Whose love was given a human face in Jesus of Nazareth,

Whose love was crucified by the evil that waits to enslave us all,

And whose love, defeating even death, is our glorious promise of freedom.

Therefore, though we are sometimes fearful and full of doubt, in God we trust; And in the name of Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves in the service of others,

To seek justice and to live in peace,

To care for the earth and to share the commonwealth of God's goodness,

To live in the freedom of forgiveness and the power of the spirit of love, and in the company of the faithful, so to be the church for the glory of God. 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

Mike Pearson

***DOXOLOGY**

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

*Come, thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise his name, I'm fixed upon it, name of God's redeeming love.*

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Friend, **your faithfulness endures to all generations, from the beginning of time until all time is past. May we, your children, be faithful in our time. Accept these gifts as the expression of our faithfulness, and bless them for Your sake. 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 to the table of the Good Shepherd.

P: **Come and listen to his voice as he calls you.**

L: Come and see how he sets a table and invites you to join him.

P: **Come and hear how even though we fail him, he is faithful with us.**

All: **Let us come just as we are, and join him at his table of grace.**

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 Satisfy the Hungry Heart

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain (Unison)

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'You Satisfy the Hungry Heart'. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are written below the treble staff. The first system of music covers the first line of lyrics: 'You sat-is - fy the hun-gry heart with gift of fin-est wheat;'. The second system of music covers the second line of lyrics: 'come give to us, O sav-ing Lord, the bread of life to eat.' The music is written in a simple, unison style suitable for congregational singing.

You sat-is - fy the hun-gry heart with gift of fin-est wheat;

come give to us, O sav-ing Lord, the bread of life to eat.

They'll Know We Are Christians

***We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored:***

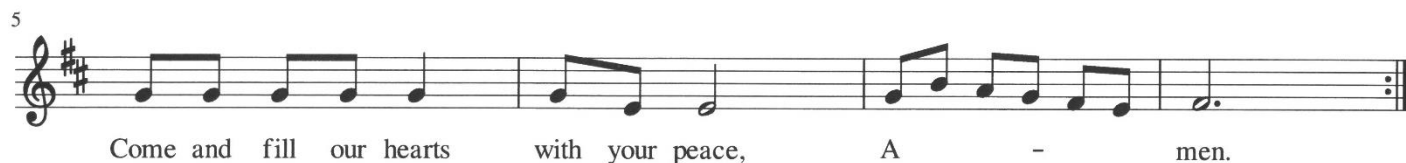
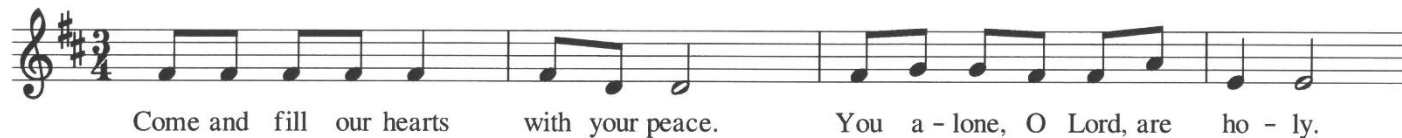
***Refrain: And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.***

***We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land: Refrain***

***We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride: Refrain***

***All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,
And all praise to Christ Jesus, God's only Son,
And all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one: Refrain***

Come and Fill Our Hearts



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

Now Let Us from This Table Rise

Blue #715

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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2024 Youth Musical "Rescue in the Night"



SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Rebecca Ferguson
Deacons: Karen Lloyd, Brian Miller,
Loral Keil, Tracy Hagberg,
Laura Anderson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Louie Filkins
Coffee
Fellowship: Deb Meyer
Welcomers: Norma Revels, JoAnn Lentz
Counters: Marie Roe, Scott Nelson
Altar table flowers are given by Larry and Barb Peterson in celebration of their 57th 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>Aug 25, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,264	\$ 353,901
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 355,742

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), Kate Kirkwood (friend of Traci Hagberg), Rev. Kurt Katzmar, Larry Bauer, Barb de Souza

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those getting ready for Rally Day on Sunday, September 8th, may it be a joyous and fun day
- For those who participated in the Youth Musical, it was awesome!
- For those who volunteered for Tools for Schools, it was a blessing to all
- For those who unloaded, sold and bought our peaches for our youth fundraiser, enjoy!
- For those who agreed to be Sunday School teachers this fall, we are thankful for you all!

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 our choir and bell groups who begin practicing this coming Wednesday, we missed you!
- 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 return of fall schedules and routines
- For all those signing up to be Sunday School teachers, you are God's angels
- For Barb and Larry Peterson who celebrate their 57th wedding anniversary on September 2nd with flowers on the altar and love in their hearts. Cue the 'aaaaws'

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 as they gather on Saturday, September 7th at noon for a Memorial Service with visitation an hour before and a lunch to follow
- 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 Text 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

Sunday Morning Text Study: Please join us on Sunday mornings to discuss the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets from 9:00–9:50 Sunday mornings in the Youth Room. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

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

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.

Food Pantry: The River Falls Food Pantry is in urgent need of monetary donations! Information about donations can be found on their website at <https://rfcfp.org/>. Grocery donations can be brought to 705 St. Croix Street, RF, during their hours of operation (Mondays 10am-12pm and 6-7:30pm; Wednesdays 1-5pm; Thursdays 6-7:30pm; Fridays 10am-12pm). Thank you!!

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

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!

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 gatherings are **Tues, September 3 & 17**. Join us!

Peaches: Another successful peach fundraiser is completed. Our wonderful unloading crew unloaded, labeled, and stacked 463 boxes of peaches in an hour. The ladies at the pick-up table and the youth & adults carrying the boxes for our customers did an awesome job fulfilling orders. Most of all, thank you to everyone who ordered the delicious boxes of peaches. Your purchases are very much appreciated and help provide funds for youth activities.

Cribbage Night: The cribbage group meets on the second Monday at **7:00 pm**. Players are asked to donate \$2 and the group decides which charity to donate to. All players & abilities welcome. The next game is on **Sept 9**.

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 **Sept 10 & 24**.

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 fristroe@gmail.com

Church Yoga: The church yoga group meets on **Tuesdays and Thursdays** in the church Fellowship Hall from **9:00-10:00 am** and via Zoom. Please contact the church office to receive the Zoom link.

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.

Community Life

ONE More Sunday School Teacher Needed: We still need one more teacher in order to have all the spots filled. Please volunteer. Teachers teach as part of a team and typically teach once every three Sundays. The need is urgent. To volunteer or for more information, please contact Pastor Stacy.

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**.

Worship Bag Organizer Needed: We have worship bags with activities for young children to use during worship. The Christian Education committee is looking for two volunteers to help replenish the bags prior to Sundays. The job will typically take 30 minutes. If you would like to be part of a team to do this task, please contact Pastor Stacy.

Mortgage Burning: We are burning the church bank mortgage! Join us on **Sun, Sept 15** when, after worship, we will gather out on the church lawn to creatively burn our church mortgage leaving us bank debt free!

An Evening of Art: Sabbatical Trip Update: You are invited to "An Evening of Art" on **Tues, Sept 24, at 6:30 pm**. Pastor Stacy will share a few stories about the Myers family's sabbatical trip and explore favorite pieces of art. Dessert will be included. Please sign up at church or online.

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.

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: James 1:17-27

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Song of Solomon 2:8-13

The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.