

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

November 24, 2024



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

Christ the King

November 24, 2024

Twenty-Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 am

Gathering

“When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it – always.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

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.

No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!

- Please stop at the welcome station for a gift.
- Please note our worship service is livestreamed.

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP (Based on Psalm 100)

L: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

P: Worship the Lord with gladness; come into God’s presence with singing.

L: Know that the Lord is God. God made us, and we are God’s people.

P: Enter God’s house with thanksgiving and praise.

L: Thank God and bless God’s holy name.

P: The Lord is good. God’s love is steadfast and endures forever.

L: God’s faithfulness knows no end.

All: Praise the Lord! Let us worship with our whole hearts.

***HYMN**

Crown Him with Many Crowns

Blue #317

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Beckoning God, you invited us to walk the narrow path and to live lives worthy of the gospel.

P: Yet how often we hold a grudge, sustain a pout, harbor a complaint.

L: Too often we are preoccupied with our hurts and absorbed in the little injustices done to us.

P: We neglect our high calling to visit the sick, care for the poor, feed the hungry, and work for justice.

L: Empowering God, open our eyes and strengthen our wills to care for the ill, to shelter the homeless and provide security for the abused, to feed the hungry and to pester those in control to care for the well-being of all their citizens.

P: Let our lives be worthy of Christ the King, the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer of all. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Let us embrace the way of Jesus here and now.

P: Let us live as Jesus' people and be at peace.

L: In Christ we are forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God.

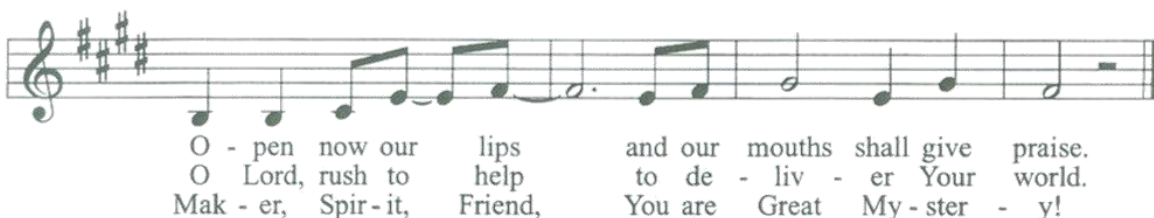
L: May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

P: And also with you.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

*GLORIA



Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Revelation 1:4-8

PSALM 93 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R Capo 1 D *mp* F#7 Bsus² Bm Bm⁷ Em A⁷ Dsus⁴ D



Ho - ly One, we thank you for your sav - ing po - wer.

L: The LORD is king, robed in majesty; the LORD is robed, girded with strength.

P: **God has established the world; it shall never be moved;**

L: Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.

P: **The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.**

L: More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the LORD!

P: **Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O LORD, for evermore. R**

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: Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! People will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. When our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. This is the Lord's table, not ours, and our Savior Jesus Christ invites those who trust him to share the feast that he has prepared.

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 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.

Sing to the Lord of Harvest

Blue #724

(Verse 1 – Solo; Verses 2 and 3 – All)

They'll Know We Are Christians

Blue #595

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.**

Proclaiming the Word

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Chris Myers

SONG (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)

*This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears all nature sings,
and round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world; I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees,
of skies and seas; his hand the wonders wrought.*

GOSPEL LESSON

John 18:33-37

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Soon and Very Soon

Blue #523

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. 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

Now Thank We All Our God

David Reilly

***DOXOLOGY**

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

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Creator God, you have gifted us with a beautiful and abundant world in which to live. You have also gifted us with the responsibility of being stewards of your creation. We acknowledge that all that we have is yours, and we return now a portion of it to you. Accept our tithes and offerings, we pray, as our grateful response to your generosity with us. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

You Servants of God, Your Sovereign Proclaim

Black #305

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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Giving Thanks Meal

Thanks to ALL who made our Giving Thanks meal a rousing success!
Over 220 served in 30 minutes. A new record.



SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Rebecca Ferguson
Deacons: Cindy Gandrud, Tanya Larsen,
Lance Lueck, Loral Keil,
Brian Miller
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Tim Bylander
Welcomers: Bob and Janet Johnson
Coffee
Fellowship: Beatty Family
Counters: Jean Smith, Trish Graves
*Altar table flowers are given by Loral Keil and
Brian Miller in celebration of their 43rd
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>Nov 17, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 16,404	\$ 472,021
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 481,298

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, Jeff (brother-in-law of Janice Healy), Rev. Kurt Katzmar, Barbara de Souza, Mike (friend of Mark Hudnall), Larry Bauer, Kevin (friend of Tanya Larsen), Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams), Art (father of Christina Krueger)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For Pastor Deb as she retires from her church position to spend more time with family and as we celebrate her two-year ministry here on her last Sunday, December 1st, may God grant her rest and renewal in this next stage of her life
- For our Discipleship Team as they work to secure pledges to fully fund our church ministry for 2025 as we dedicated our financial pledges on Sunday, November 17th, may we be blessed with generous hearts
- For those who enjoyed last week's Giving Thanks meal, it was wonderful!
- For those gearing up for the Advent Workshop for families, may it be a time of crafty connections
- For our Sunday School kids working on their Christmas program on Sunday, December 22, may it kindle faith in them and us

Prayers for our World:

- For those traveling over the Thanksgiving holiday, may you have safe journeys and enjoy time with family and friends
- For a safe and fruitful hunting season
- For lasting peace in the Middle East that brings justice and security to all people and for those working for a lasting peace in the Middle East, may God's Spirit be present
- For all of us as we work to better care for the gift of God's good creation and reduce the effects of climate change

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For all who helped prepare, cook, serve and cleanup after our annual Giving Thanks Meal in which 225 folks were served in less than 30 minutes, thank you!
- For Don and Ginny Larson who celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on November 20th, may God continue to bless you both! Wow!
- For Loral Keil and Brian Miller who celebrate their 43rd wedding anniversary on November 28, may you continue to grow in love
- For our own Matt Cernohous who was recently appointed acting Fire Chief for the River Falls Fire Department, God bless you in your service to our community

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Richard Paulson, brother of Merle, and the family of Jean Hector, mother of Kathryn, both of whom died suddenly recently, may their families be strengthened at this difficult time
- For the saints of First Congregational as we remembered them on All Saints Sunday, November 3rd: Susan Koosmann, Bill Olson, Fred Volkmann, Sheila Peterson, Dahn Carrison, Dorothy Sorenson, Dick Alexander, Neal Prochnow, Harold Fosmo, Richard Wells, Ron Truesdill, Janice Charpentier

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

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!

Inquirer's Class: New to church? Want to know more about our life and ministry? Join us for the Inquirer's Class on **Tues, Dec 3 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. At this 90-minute gathering, you will meet church leaders, other new folks and learn more about First Congregational Church. Dessert and childcare are provided. Please sign up.

Advent Evening Prayer Returns: Each Wednesday in Advent, we gather for worship using the Holden Evening Prayer Service of simple songs, scripture and stories. Join us on **Wed, Dec 4, 11 and 18 at 6:30 pm** in the sanctuary for the absolutely lovely thirty-minute worship service.

Christmas Eve Worship Changes: This year, we will again offer our 4:00 pm Christmas Eve family worship with candlelight, communion & a story for children of all ages. The late service this Christmas Eve will move to 10:00 pm, an hour earlier than previous years. It will again include the choir, communion & candlelight. Please join us at either service this Christmas Eve as we again welcome the Christ child into our world & lives and consider inviting a friend to join you.

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: Wednesday afternoon Adult Bible Study meets from **1:00–2:30 pm**. The group is discussing *Signs and Wonders*, by Amy-Jill Levine. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve: Poinsettia sales have begun. The order forms are on the sign-up table. The cost is \$15.00 each. Please return the order form with payment by **Dec 15**. The plants will be on display for the Christmas Eve services. You may pick your plants up after the 10pm service on Christmas Eve. Proceeds go toward youth activities.

Christmas Shoebox: The drive for donations for Christmas Shoebox items for the gentlemen at Kinnic Falls Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services has begun. The items we collect are so very much appreciated by them. If you would rather donate cash, just designate it for the Christmas Shoebox. The list of items needed is on the gathering table.

Sharing Families Giving Tree: If you would like to help some children have a better Christmas this year, please select an ornament from the tree and purchase a gift from their wish list. The unwrapped gift with the ornament needs to be at the church **no later than noon Thurs, Dec 12**. Please give the gift cards to someone in the church office. If you would like to make a cash donation instead, please put "Sharing Families" in the memo line. Thank you for your generosity. If you have questions, please contact Diane Welsh (651-334-3128 or 715-386-6620) or the church office.

The Christmas Fund: The Christmas Fund has been caring for active & retired clergy & lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities & health premiums, & Christmas "Thank You" gift each December to our lower income retirees. United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank You! There are envelopes on the gathering table or you can put a check in the offering plate with "Christmas Fund" on the memo line.

Reverse Advent Calendars: The Reverse Advent Calendars are ready for pick up. "Reverse" reminds us Advent is a season of giving. Rather than getting a toy or candy each day, we will be adding a food item to the Reverse Advent grocery bag. Each bag has a list of a suggested daily donation, but you can use your imagination and add whatever you want. When the bag is full, bring it in and leave it in the gathering area. The Mission Ed Committee will bring all the bags to the Food Pantry at the end of December. Thank you!

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**.

Loving Self

Blue Christmas: Join us **Thurs, Dec 19 at 6:30 pm** for a service of blessing for those who are low in spirit, grieving, lonely, dealing with physical or mental trauma. If you are looking for comfort, hope, wholeness & renewal, please sign up

Family Meals: On Wednesday nights, we offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$9 per person with a family max of \$30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:00 pm.** You can get your meal to go if you go through the line (indicate when you sign up). **Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays.** You can make a reservation online, at church or by calling. There is no meal on Nov 27th. The next meal will be Dec 4th.

Game Day Sunday is Dec 15 following Coffee Fellowship. Bring a dish to share. Join us!

Cribbage Night: The cribbage group meets the second Monday. Players are asked to donate \$2 & the group decides which charity. Playing time is **7:00 pm.** All players & abilities welcome. The next game is **Dec 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. Our next gatherings are **Nov 26 & Dec 10.** Join us!

Women's Group: Interested in fellowship & community with other women? Pastor Deb invites you to join her at Noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday. Please bring a sack lunch. The next meeting will be **Nov 26.**

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.

Let's Knit/Craft Together: Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am. We meet at The Sycamore on the first Thursday of each month and in the Fellowship Hall the other Thursdays.** We have a great time sharing our projects & enjoying each other's company. Any questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or firstroe@gmail.com

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

Pastor Deb Retirement Gathering: After two years serving as our Minister for Community and Outreach, Pastor Deb Meyer is retiring so she can spend more time with her family. Her last Sunday will be **Sunday, December 1.** Join us during the Coffee Fellowship that day as we honor her time here and send her off into retirement with cake and cookies.

Ornament Sale Fundraiser: The Music Committee has been blessed with wonderful wooden ornaments made by Bob Johnson to sell for this Christmas season. Prices will vary depending on the size & detail. Some of the ornaments are made to stand on the shelf while others are for hanging. 100% of the proceeds go to the Music Committee for future concerts & events. The ornament sale will begin today in the gathering area and will continue each Sunday. These ornaments will go fast and make great Christmas gifts. Thank you in advance from the Music Committee.

The Art of Sadao Watanabe: The fine art exhibit in the Fellowship Hall is called *Witness to Faith: The Biblical Art of Sadao Watanabe*. It features twenty works by Japan's foremost Christian artist of the 20th century. We will hold a repeat of the initial discussion of Watanabe's work on **Monday, November 25 at 6:30 pm.** Friends from HOPE Lutheran Church will join us that evening. Please come! This art is not to be missed. Please sign up online or at church.

The Advent Workshop: The 2024 Advent Workshop for families will be in the Fellowship Hall following Sunday School on **December 8**, the Second Sunday in Advent. The event includes making a variety of Christmas ornaments. If you have friends or neighbors considering participation in a church family, invite them to join you! Please sign up.

Annual Christmas Luncheon: You are invited to attend a Christmas Luncheon on **Tues, Dec 10, at noon.** The menu features Norwegian meatballs and a beautiful collection of Christmas cookies. Please come! The cost is \$10.00 per person. Please make a reservation at church or online. Please let the office know if you need a ride.

Journey House Event: Journey House will be sponsoring an opportunity to both meet Deacon Ben Rush AND help deck the house out for Christmas on **Sunday, Dec 8, from 1:00-3:00 pm.** For those interested in learning a little bit more about Journey House, as well as its sister volunteer group, The Friends of Journey House, this is a great opportunity. And please feel free to bring any decorations you would like to donate.

Youth Events

Children's Advent Musical: Sunday School children in pre-school through grade 5 will begin rehearsing the 2024 Advent Musical on November 10 during Sunday School. The dress rehearsal will be on Saturday, December 21, 10:00–12:00 noon. The musical will be presented during worship on Sunday, December 22. It is important for all children to regularly attend Sunday School and be present for these rehearsals.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Revelation 1:4-8

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds;

every eye will see him,

even those who pierced him;

and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 18:33-37

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered, 'Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?' Pilate replied, 'I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.' Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.'