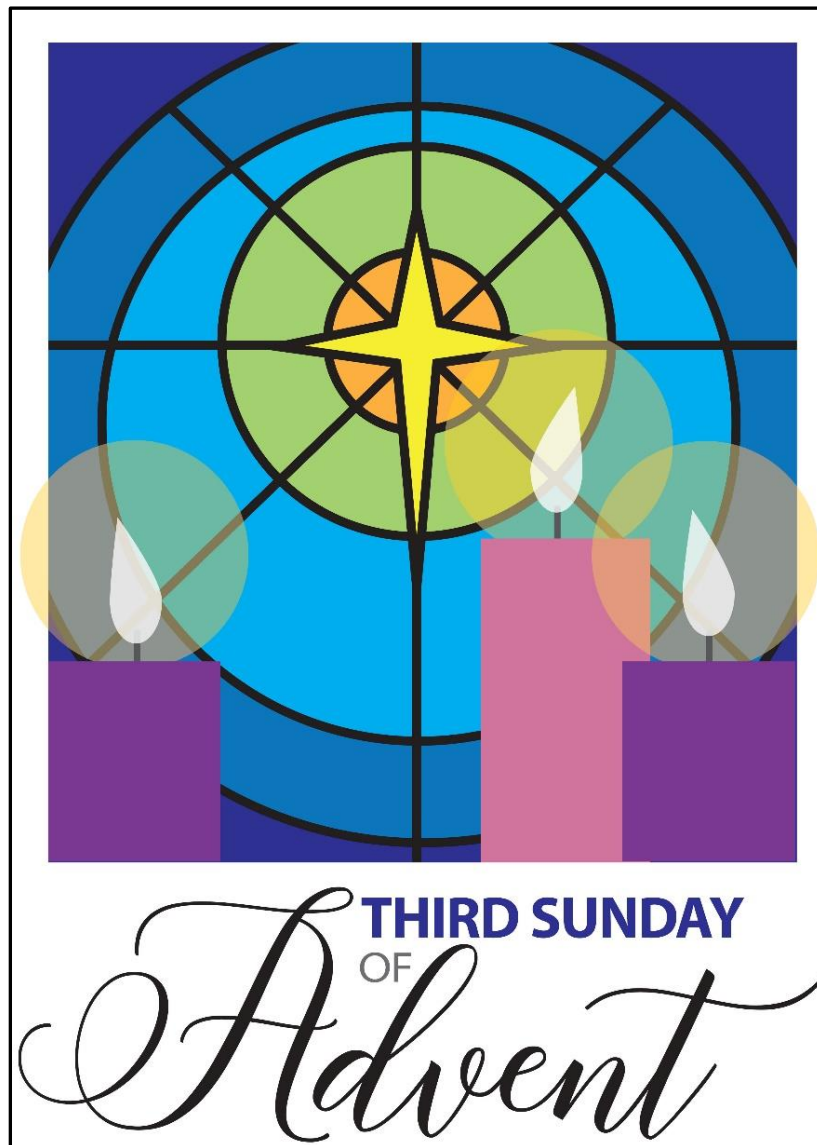


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

December 15, 2024



**THIRD SUNDAY
OF**
Advent

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

December 15, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent

10:00 am

Gathering

When you rise in the morning, give thanks for the light, for your life, for your strength.
Give thanks for your food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason to give thanks,
the fault lies in yourself.

- Tecumseh

<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.	<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> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Please stop at the welcome station for a gift.- Please note our worship service is livestreamed.
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GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Today is the third Sunday in Advent,

P: We gather today to listen to God's Word.

L: Advent is a season filled with opportunities to respond to God's wonderful news,

P: To hear the joyful news; to respond humbly to God's wondrous promise fulfilled.

(Light the third Advent candle)

L: We light this third candle,

P: To symbolize the JOY that we can know in humble service.

L: God, help every ear and every heart be filled with humility as we receive the joy of your good news in Jesus Christ.

P: We are HUMBLY PRAYING,

All: "Come to us today."

Canticle of the Turning

Verses



1. My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
 2. Though I am small, my God, my all, you
 3. From the halls of power to the for - tress tower, not a
 4. Though the na - tions rage from age to age, we re -



God of my heart is great, And my spir - it sings of the
 work great things in me, And your mer - cy will last from the
 stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
 mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait. You
 depths of the past to the end of the age to be. Your
 jus - tice tears ev - 'ry ty - rant from his throne. The
 liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp. This



fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
 ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
 hun - gry poor shall weep no more, for the
 sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak - ness you did not spurn, So from east to west shall my
 those who would for you yearn, You will show your might, put the
 food they can nev - er earn; There are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry
 prom - ise which holds us bound, 'Til the spear and rod can be



name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
 strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
 mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
 crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.

Refrain



My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the



fires of your jus - tice burn. Wipe a - way all tears, for the



dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn!

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Forgive us, Lord, if we leave little room for wonder in our lives. Too often we are obsessed with control and explanations. Surprises throw us off balance and the unknown scares us. During this Advent season amaze us again with your grace and help us recognize your marvelous deeds, which you are working all around us. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Hear the Good News! The Messiah comes to bring good news to the oppressed,

P: **To bind up the brokenhearted,**

L: To proclaim liberty to the captives,

P: **And release to the prisoners.**

L: Jesus comes in the form of a little bitty baby,

P: **To save us from our sin.**

All **Let us spread the Good News! 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

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

*He came down that we may have peace; He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace; 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

Philippians 4:4-9

ISAIAH 12 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)



L: God alone is my rock; why then should I be afraid?

P: **God along is my strength; who then can stand before me?**

L: God alone is my rest; the Lord God is my safety.
P: God alone is my peace; God shatters steel and nations.
L: God alone is my day; God's name will shine before me.
P: God alone is my prize; though mountains fall to pieces.
All: God alone is my life, living, now and forever. R

Celebrating the Meal

All Christians are welcome at the Lord's table. The bread is gluten-free. The cup is alcohol-free.
Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.

The Invitation to the Meal

L: With joy let us come before our God.
P: Like Mary let us sing God's praise.
L: Like Joseph let us trust God is present.
P: Like John let us prepare our hearts and lives
L: Like Elizabeth let our souls leap for joy.
P: Like the shepherds let us come and worship.
All: Let us gather around the table of our Lord and be fed.

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:

Gather Your People

Congregation join on refrain:

Gath-er your peo-ple, O Lord. Gath-er your peo-ple, O
Lord. One bread, one bod-y, one spir-it of
love. Gath-er your peo-ple, O Lord.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in 3/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics. The second staff contains the melody for the second line of lyrics. The third staff contains the melody for the third line of lyrics. The lyrics are written below the notes.

As We Gather at Your Table

Blue #695

You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

Blue #705

In God Alone

In God a-lone my soul can find rest and peace, in God my peace and joy.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major and 4/4 time. The top staff is the melody, and the bottom staff is the bass line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

On-ly in God my soul can find its rest, . . . find its rest and peace.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major and 4/4 time. The top staff is the melody, and the bottom staff is the bass line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

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.)

*Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (stomp, stomp).
You do not know the hour when the Lord is coming.
Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (stomp, stomp).
The Lord is coming soon.*

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 3:7-18

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Long Ago, Prophets Knew

Blue #167

***STATEMENT OF FAITH for Advent**

L: In quietness and darkness, in peace and confusion, Jesus Christ wants to make his home and meet his friends. He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope for the world.**

L: In him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant;

P: **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world.**

L: In him there is neither black nor white, neither north nor south;

P: **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world.**

L: In him there is neither male nor female, neither master nor servant;

P: **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world. 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

The First Noel
Arr. by Jason Krug

Jubilee Ringers

*OFFERTORY

Prepare the Way of the Lord
(Sung twice)

The musical notation is written on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of two lines of music. The first line is divided into two measures, labeled I and II. The second line is divided into two measures, labeled III and IV. The lyrics are: 'Pre - pare the way of the Lord. Pre - pare the way of the Lord, and all peo-ple will see the sal - va - tion of our God. Pre -'.

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Generous God, we thank you for bringing us to this season of faith, hope, and love. As we look at our lives, we see evidence of the many ways that you have provided for us. May gratitude well up in our hearts and overflow in generosity to our neighbors. May our acts of kindness as a church bear good fruit in the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

Angels We Have Heard on High

Blue #188

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Larissa Lueck
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Marshall Skule,
Karen Lloyd, Cindy Gandrud,
Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Terry Mithun
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Vicki Sippel
Welcomers: Dennis and Lynn Linder
Coffee
Fellowship: Larry and Barb Peterson
Counters: Diane Welsh, Scott Nelson
*Altar table flowers are given by David Reilly
in memory of Ruth Reilly.*

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Christopher Myers
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers
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>Dec 8, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 4,833	\$ 517,834
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 512,687

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'



Christmas Eve Worship Services

4:00 pm Family Christmas Eve Worship with Communion
10:00 pm Christmas Eve Worship with Choir and Communion
Please join us as we welcome the Christ child into our world
and lives and consider inviting a friend to join you.

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Sue Taylor, Jeff (brother-in-law of Janice Healy), Barbara de Souza, Mike (friend of Mark Hudnall), Larry Bauer, Kevin (friend of Tanya Larsen), Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams), Fred and Mary Ross (Beth Rausch's parents)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our Bell Choir presenting their music this Sunday, may your notes bring joy to our world
- For our Sunday School kids working on their Christmas program on Sunday, December 22, may it kindle faith in them and us
- For those who will receive gifts from the Giving Tree, may they be tangible signs of God's presence
- For those receiving amaryllis plants, may they kindle joy in all who receive them
- For those who will receive food as part of the Reverse Advent Calendar, may it bless givers and receivers
- 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 17, may we be blessed with generous hearts

Prayers for our World:

- For those travelling over the Christmas and New Year's holidays, may you travel safely
- For students gearing up for end of term exams, may your diligence be rewarded
- For lasting peace in the Middle East that brings justice and security to all people, 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 cook, serve and clean up after the Christmas Luncheon, which was enjoyed by over 140 people this year, it was delicious!
- For the River Falls High School Costumed Carolers who graced our annual Christmas Luncheon this past week under the direction of Tanner Pietz who sings in our choir, you brought smiles to all of us
- For the \$1198.23 that was donated to the River Falls Food Pantry as the proceeds from our annual Giving Thanks meal in November, that you for your generosity!
- 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 Tanya Larsen as she mourns her mother Gloria who died last Sunday, may her family mourn in hope
- For the Paulson family as they mourn Richard, and the Hector family as they mourn Jean, may their families be strengthened at this difficult time

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

Thanks to all who cooked, served, cleaned up and attended our Annual Christmas Luncheon. It was awesome!



SCRIPTURE LESSON: Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 3:7-18

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.