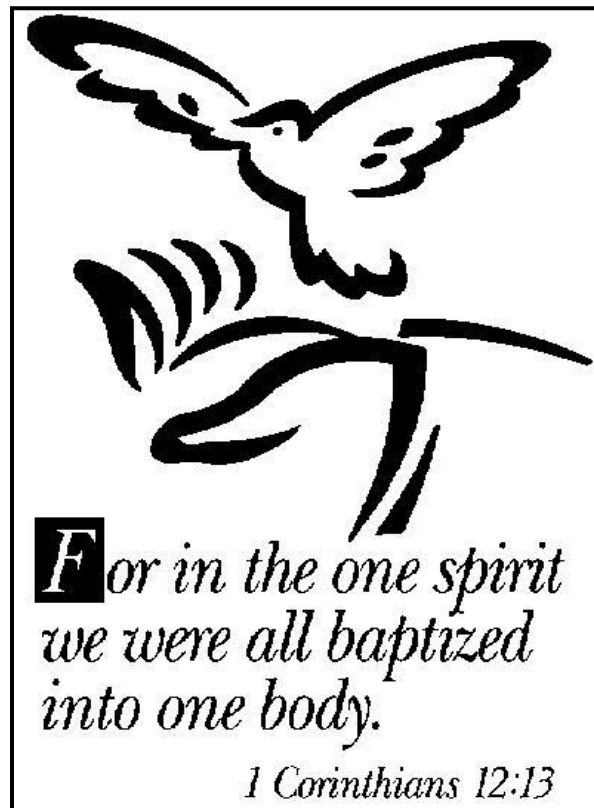


**First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
River Falls, Wisconsin**

**January 26, 2025**



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

January 26, 2025

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

10:00 am

**Gathering**

"Anybody can observe the Sabbath, but making it holy  
surely takes the rest of the week."

- Alice Walker, 21st century

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**

L: A gift of a new day,

**P: Unlived, untried, ready to be opened.**

L: A new day with surprising miracles;

**P: With love to be given,**

L: Kindness to be shared,

**P: And peace to be enjoyed.**

L: A gift of a new day,

**P: God's gift to us.**

L: Let us receive it with joy.

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

\*HYMN

*I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me*

Blue #574

## \*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of Love, we do not always recognize your words as loving. As the people of Nazareth grew angry with Jesus, we often grow hostile when your wisdom and insight challenge our own. Content with our priorities, we resent your prophets. Set in our ways, we fail to become agents of your love and grace.

God of justice and mercy, remind us of your great love, that our hearts might be open to new ideas or people. Awaken us to your challenges, that we might awaken others to the coming of your Spirit. Amen.

## \*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that many of God's gifts were temporary, but that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

P: **God's love endures and abides with us, even when we reject it.**

L: Know that God's love persists with us, and be at peace. 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

*Amen*

(Led by the Choir)

*(Sung twice)*

*Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen*

## Hearing the Word

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

### PSALM 19 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

*R*



Lord, to - day we have seen your glo - ry, dawn fol - lows the night.



We, your peo - ple who walked in dark - ness now have seen a great light.

L: The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.

P: **Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.**

- L: There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
- P: In the heavens God has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy.**
- L: Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hidden from its heat.
- P: The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; R**
- L: The commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes; the trust of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
- P: More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.**
- L: Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
- P: But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults.**
- L: Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.
- P: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. 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: Come people of God, let us sing!
- P: Let us sing for we are God's people and God has done wonderful things.**
- L: Let us come into God's presence with joy and thanksgiving.
- P: Let us come into God's presence and let God feed us on the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing. Come Holy Spirit, come!**

#### ***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:*

**Let Us Break Bread Together**

**Blue #699**

***Let us break bread together on our knees;***

***Let us break bread together on our knees;***

**Refrain: *When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,  
O Lord, have mercy on me.***

***Let us drink wine together on our knees;***

***Let us drink wine together on our knees; Refrain***

***Let us praise God together on our knees;***

***Let us praise God together on our knees; Refrain***

**Swing Low, Sweet Chariot**

**Blue #520**

*Congregation join on refrain:*

***Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home;***

***Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home.***

**We Shall Overcome**

**Blue #512**

*Congregation join on refrain:*

***Oh, deep in my heart I do believe***

***we shall overcome some day!***

***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 little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.*

**GOSPEL LESSON**

**Luke 4:14-21**

**SERMON**

**Rev. Michael Jones**

**\*HYMN**

*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me*

**Blue #506**

**\*STATEMENT OF FAITH** (World Council of Churches)

**I believe in the living God, the Maker of all humankind who creates and sustains the universe in power and in love.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God incarnate on earth, who showed us by his words and work, suffering with others, conquest of death, what human life ought to be and what God is like.**

**I believe that the Spirit of God is present with us now and always, and can be experienced in prayer, in forgiveness, in the Word, the Sacraments, the community of the Church and all that we do. 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**

*Gather at the River*

**Chancel Choir**

*Arr. by Susan LaBarr*

## \*OFFERTORY



Let us bring ev - 'ry gift, let us trea - sure ev - 'ry grace: As you've



giv - en to us, let us share. In our neigh - bor to - day we will



meet you face to face, Let your love be the rule ev - 'ry - where.

## \*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Holy and Gracious God, **with thankful and glad hearts, we offer our tithes and offerings to you. Thank you for the privilege of participating in your kingdom, of spreading the good news, of taking care of the “least of these.” Use these gifts, and us, for your purposes and will in our world. For Christ’s sake we pray. Amen.**

Sending

## \*HYMN

*Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*

Blue #496

## \*BLESSING

## POSTLUDE

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Our guest preacher this morning is the Rev. Michael Jones, our Associate Conference Minister for the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ. Please be sure to welcome him.



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**SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS**

Preacher: Rev. Michael Jones  
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers  
Cantor: David Reilly  
Liturgist: Carol Merriman  
Deacons: Cindy Gandrud, Tanya Larsen,  
Ann Nelson, Laura Anderson,  
Lance Lueck  
Organist: Marsha Pearson  
Nursery: Kahla Fuller  
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman  
Trustee: Scott Nelson  
Welcomers: JoAnn Lentz, Susan Walden  
Coffee  
Fellowship: Congregational Croissants  
Counters: Jane Truesdill, Mark Anderson

**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

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**Treasurer's Report****Dec 31, 2024**

General Fund Income	\$ 555,541.86
General Fund Expenses	<u>\$ 546,729.57</u>
2024 Net Income	<u>\$ 8,812.29</u>

**Jan 19, 2025**

General Fund Income*	<u>\$ 47,227.54</u>
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A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

\*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

A new budget will be approved at the Feb 2 Annual Meeting.

**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), Barbara de Souza, Larry Bauer, Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams), Jim French (father of Missy Linaberry), Kelly Luckey (friend of Barb Peterson), Christopher (brother of Paul Anderson)

**Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:**

- For the Rev. Michael Jones, our Northwest Association Associate Conference Minister who is preaching this Sunday, that he may be given grace and wisdom as he shares greetings from the larger United Church of Christ
- For our committees and teams gearing up for the Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 2, that we may celebrate our accomplishments in 2024 in humility and grace and plan for 2025 with hope and expectation
- For ending the 2024 budget year with a modest surplus, thanks be to God!
- For the new Men's Group meeting for three Thursdays in February at The Garage and then to FMSC to pack meals, may we better connect and support one another on our Christian journey
- For the nearly \$150,000 given last year to missions outside the church walls, thank you for being hands of Christ at work in the world (more details will be given at the Annual Meeting on February 2)
- For our moderator Kathy Rausch as she ends her two-year term at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 2nd and for Marie Roe, currently our Moderator-Elect, as she begins, may God bless and strengthen you both!
- For the return of Connecting Through Cooking classes with Chef Peter Kwong in our church kitchen on the first two Tuesdays in February, may they feed us in body and soul

**Prayers for our World:**

- For firefighters battling wildfires in California and the tens of thousands evacuated and rebuilding, may you all be given God's strength and our gratitude
- For our nation as our newly elected government officials take their offices, that they may govern justly, work for the common good and solve our real problems
- For the hope of peace in Gaza and Israel, 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 our Trustees and their helpers who will clean the inside of the church on Saturday, February 1st from 9am to 11am, many hands make light work!
- For those who helped cook and serve the funeral dinner this past Thursday for the Hall family, you are angels
- For Evelyn Adele Sitz born to Heather and Danny and grandparent Maxine and Tom on Friday, January 10th, who is home and safe and wonderful, thanks be to God!
- For Josh Sippel who graduates from Basic Training at Ft Jackson, SC on February 6 and will then do training at Fort Gregg-Adams located in VA, congratulations and thank you for your service
- For Salem Elaine who arrived on Thursday, December 19th to Marlee and Joe Querna and grandparents Wendy and John Querna, may she be welcomed in love and grace
- For Maverick Martin Bos born on December 18th to Alison and Tony Bos and grandparents Dean and Sue Grisar and proud uncle Dennis, who arrived at 7 lbs 9 oz and 20 inches, may he grow in grace and love

**For those grieving the loss of loved ones:**

- For the family of Ralph D'Angelo (brother-in-law of Deb Meyer) who died suddenly this past week, may his wife Cindy and their family be given strength and faith
- For the family of Rollie Hall who died this past week, may you be comforted
- For the family of Bud Merriman (father-in-law of Carol Merriman), who died this past week at 103, thanks be to God!
- For the family of Tanya Larsen as she mourns her mother Gloria, 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.

## **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!

**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:** The Adult Bible Study group meets on **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30 pm**. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

### **Loving Neighbor**

**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](http://amongfriendsrf.com) & Facebook. It is held at church **Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am to 3pm**.

### **Loving Self**

**Merry Widows:** They will meet on **Wed, Feb 19 at 1:00 pm at West Wind**. All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

**Cribbage Night:** The group meets the second Monday. Players are asked to donate \$2 & the group decides which charity. Playing time is **7:00 pm**. All abilities welcome. The next game is **Feb 10**.

**New Evening Men's Group:** An Evening Men's Group will meet for 3 Thursdays in February. We will meet **Thurs, Feb 13 and 20 from 6:30-7:30 pm** at The Garage Bikes and Brews then head to Feed My Starving Children to pack meals on **Thurs, Feb 27 from 7:00-8:30 pm**. Our purpose is to connect with each other and our Christian faith. Please sign up online or at church and see Pastor Chris for more details. All guys welcome!

**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 & lively conversation. Our next gatherings are **Feb 4 & 18**.

**Women's Group:** Interested in fellowship & community with other women? You are invited to join the group at noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday. Please bring a sack lunch. The next meetings will be **Jan 28 & Feb 11 & 25**.

**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 & the Fellowship Hall the other Thursdays**. We have a great time sharing our projects and enjoying each other's company. Any questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or [firstroe@gmail.com](mailto:firstroe@gmail.com)

**WISE Corner:** NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group is held the **2nd and 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at the River Falls Public Library**. For more information, call Marg Downing at 715-307-5905.

## **Community Life**

**Annual Meeting:** The Annual Meeting of the congregation will be **Sunday, February 2** in the Fellowship Hall starting at about 11:15 am. In addition to receiving reports, passing budgets and electing officers, we will also hear ministry updates from many of our teams and committees. Please sign up so we have enough food!

**Learning Community: Conflict in the Middle East:** Please mark your calendars for a Learning Community focused on the Israel/Hamas conflict. Dr. Andrew Latham, Professor of Political Science at Macalester College, will provide a balanced presentation that captures the complexity of the situation in Israel and Palestine. Dr. Latham will include a perspective on the role of the US in the conflict as well as imagine components in a lasting peace for the region. The event will be **Tues, Jan 28, 6:30–8:30 pm**. Please register online or at church.

**Church Clean Up Inside:** The Trustees need your help cleaning up inside the church on **Sat, Feb 1 at 9:00 am**. Cleaning supplies will be provided. Church Interns will receive double hours for helping out. Please sign up.

**Connecting Through Cooking:** It is cold and dark so why not learn a new skill! Join Chef Peter Kwong in our church kitchen as we learn how to cook Thai and Italian food. Cost is \$30, space is limited to 15 people, and you must pay for your spot once you register at church or online. Classes take place from **5:30 to 7:30 pm** and we will eat what we cook! Here are the details:

**Tues, Feb 4:** Thai Spring Roll, Pad Thai (Chicken or Beef), Tofu Pad Prig Khing (String Beans), Thai Fried Rice

**Tues, Feb 11:** Bruschetta, Ensalada Italiana, Fettuccine Alfredo, Chicken Piccata.

**Shrimp Boil:** The Shrimp Boil Fundraiser for the Back Bay Mission Trip will be held **Tuesday, February 25 at 5:30 pm**. The menu will be peel and eat shrimp, coleslaw, breadsticks and cake and chicken fingers for those that don't like shrimp. Please get your tickets in advance on Sundays or call/stop by the church office. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$8 for kids. Also, please sign up to help with ticket sales and meal set up and clean up at church or online.

**Creative Catharsis Workshop - Thurs, Feb 27, from 6:30-8:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall:** We often put aside and neglect our creative desires and reflection of ourselves in our fast-paced, grind culture-influenced lives. This workshop aims to provide participants with an invitation to connect to their creativity and meaning-making through the process and application of collage. Using simple materials and tools, we'll explore how the simple act of sifting, sorting, cutting, and arranging paper ephemera offers a sanctuary of rest, reflection and a catalyst for self-discovery. All supplies provided. Sponsored by the WISE Team. Please sign up.

## **Youth Events**

**Youth Mission Trip Survey:** We are reaching out to gauge interest and availability for mission opportunities for the Summer of 2025 and Spring of 2026. We hope to find areas of mission work that youth and families would be interested in and provide spiritual and personal growth. Please take time to take the survey that was emailed to all families of those in grades 6-12. This survey is not a commitment to any trip or date, but rather to gauge group interest for further discussion and planning. Ask Alex for the link if you did not receive it. Either students or parents may fill out this form.

### **Youth Events for Wednesday, January 29:**

3:45-5:15 pm Wednesday School

6:30-7:30 pm Middle School Youth Group with Alex in the Youth Room

No High School Class or Youth Group

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a**

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts.

**GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 4:14-21**

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'