

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

February 2, 2025



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

February 2, 2025

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

10:00 am

Gathering

Anger and violence are the last defense of those who are made to face the truth of their own tradition which they have long defended and embraced. Learning what we already know is often painful and difficult. All of us know what it is to be at war with ourselves, sometimes making casualties of those who are guilty of nothing but speaking the truth in love.

- Fred B. Craddock

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: Welcome home!

P: Here we find a song for our souls and healing for our wounds.

L: Welcome home!

P: Here we find children's laughter that chases dark clouds away, and quiet prayers that lead us to still waters and green pastures.

L: Welcome home!

P: Here there are friends with a tender embrace, and here there are words that heal brokenness and reveal God's grace.

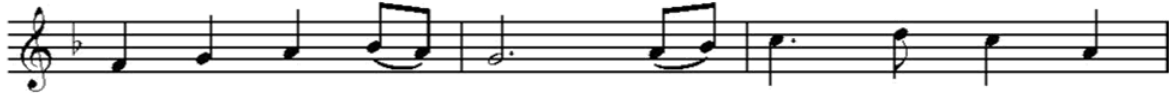
L: Welcome home!

All: Come let us gather for worship as God leads us into abundant life!

All Are Welcome



1. Let us build a house where love can dwell And
 2. Let us build a house where proph - ets speak, And
 3. Let us build a house where love is found In
 4. Let us build a house where hands will reach Be -
 5. Let us build a house where all are named, Their



all can safe - ly live, A place where saints and
 words are strong and true, Where all God's chil - dren
 wa - ter, wine and wheat: A ban - quet hall on
 yond the wood and stone To heal and strength - en,
 songs and vi - sions heard And loved and treas - ured,



chil - dren tell How hearts learn to for -
 dare to seek To dream God's reign a -
 ho - ly ground, Where peace and jus - tice
 serve and teach, And live the Word they've
 taught and claimed As words with - in the



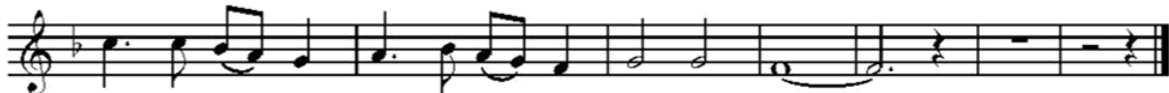
give. Built of hopes and dreams and vi - sions,
 new. Here the cross shall stand as wit - ness
 meet. Here the love of God, through Je - sus,
 known. Here the out - cast and the stran - ger
 Word. Built of tears and cries and laugh - ter,



Rock of faith and vault of grace; Here the
 And as sym - bol of God's grace; Here as
 Is re - vealed in time and space; As we
 Bear the im - age of God's face; Let us
 Prayers of faith and songs of grace, Let this



love of Christ shall end di - vi - sions:
 one we claim the faith of Je - sus:
 share in Christ the feast that frees us: All are wel - come,
 bring an end to fear and dan - ger:
 house pro - claim from floor to raft - er:



all are wel - come, all are wel - come in this place.

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Gracious and Merciful God, **you call us to love you with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Yet, we confess that we are easily distracted from your call. Too often we give ourselves over to work, but neglect our relationships. Too often our overcrowded schedules leave no room for prayer or even for you to surprise us with your grace. Forgive us, we pray. Turn our hearts once again back to you. In you may we find our true selves. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Hear the Good News: God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

P: **Let us believe, and live, the Good News.**

L: In Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

P: **In Jesus Christ, you 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

We are singing, for the Lord is our light, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

We are singing, for the Lord is our light, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

We are singing, oh, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

We are singing, oh, we are singing for the Lord is our light.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

PSALM 71:1-6 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)



L: In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.

P: **In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me.**

L: Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

P: Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.

L: For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.

P: Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you. 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: We are here because Jesus has called us – strangers and friends, locals and visitors, believers and doubters, the certain and the curious. It is always a mixed company that Jesus gathers and invites to his table where, in bread and wine, he meets us and through him we, who are different, are joined to each other. So come, not because you understand, but because you are understood. Come, not because of how you feel, but because God has food for you. Come, not because you deserve a place, but because Jesus invites you, just as you are.

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:

Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

Blue #326

Congregation join on refrain:

***Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness calling and free;
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.***

You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore

Black #173

Congregation join on refrain:

***O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes;
kindly smiling, you've called out my name.
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;
now with you I will see others seas.***

Taste and See

Congregation join on refrain:

***Taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord.
O taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.***

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.)

***I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river.
I've got peace like a river in my soul.
I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river.
I've got peace like a river in my soul.***

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 4:21-30

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Rain Down

Blue #444

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – United Church of Christ**

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. 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

Still With Thee

Chancel Choir

Arr. by Elaine Hagenberg

*OFFERTORY

We give thee but thine own, what - e'er the gift may be; all that we have is
thine a - lone a trust, O Lord, from thee.

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Dear Lord, here and now we bring our gifts to you and to your church. We ask you to receive our gifts for ministry and service. But more than that, receive our love and with our love and your divine love, may we keep on building your new earth here as it is in heaven. In Christ's name. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart

Blue #113

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Steve Koecher
Deacons: Karen Lloyd, Marshall Skule, Jena Most, Tanya Larsen, Becky Pajac
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Jane Truesdill
Welcomers: Bonnie Jones Witthuhn,
Susan Walden

Coffee

Fellowship: Church Council

Counters: Marie Roe, Dennis Linder

*Altar table flowers are given by Caren Prochnow
in loving memory of Neal Prochnow whose
birthday is February 3rd.*

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

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 26, 2025

General Fund Income*	\$ <u>66,148.54</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, Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams), Jim French (father of Missy Linaberry), Kelly Luckey (friend of Barb Peterson), Christopher (brother of Paul Anderson), Arlyn Koecher (father of Steve Koecher)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our committees and teams that have been gearing up for the Annual Meeting today, 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)
- For our moderator Kathy Rausch as she ends her two-year term at our Annual Meeting today, for Marie Roe, currently our Moderator-Elect, who begins her two-year term as moderator, and for Louie Filkins, who begins his two-year term as Moderator-Elect, may God bless and strengthen you three of you!
- 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
- For the return of our Wednesday Night Family meals on Wednesday, February 26 and running through Holy Week, may we all be fed!

Prayers for our World:

- For victims and families of the plane collision in Washington DC, may their hearts be comforted
- 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 Lou Greub who celebrates his 92nd birthday on February 18th with cake for Coffee Fellowship on Sunday, February 16th, thanks for celebrating with us!
- For our Trustees and their helpers who cleaned the inside of the church on Saturday, thank you!
- 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 Rollie Hall who died recently, may you be comforted
- For the family of Bud Merriman (father-in-law of Carol Merriman), who died 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 group meets on **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30 pm**. On Feb 26, the group will begin a new discussion book, “Entering the Passion of Jesus” by Amy-Jill Levine. This is a six-week study focused on the events of Holy Week. This study would be a particularly good time to join. The group will focus on this book on Feb 26, Mar 5, 12, 26, & Apr 2 & 9. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

Simpson Shelter Supply Needs: Thermal underwear - men’s & women’s, women’s thermal socks, men’s T-shirts - all sizes, men’s ankle socks, men’s boxer shorts - sizes M, L, personal size body wash, personal size baby oil, lip balm, women’s bras. All items MUST BE NEW (or great buys). There is a bin for donations.

Basics for Local Kids: Basics for Local Kids is a non-profit program located in Ellsworth that serves Pierce and St. Croix County families who are in need of winter clothing. There is a bin for donations of new and gently used winter wear for children ages newborn through 18 years. They are also in need of volunteers who can help families shop for free clothing. To volunteer, sign up at <https://www.basicsforlocalkids.org/>. For more info, contact Renee Whipple at 715-307-5074.

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. 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 **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

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

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.

Youth Events for Wednesday, February 5:

3:45-5:15 pm Wednesday School

6:30-7:30 pm MS Class

6:30-8:00 pm HS Youth Group - UWRF Climbing Wall, \$5, friends welcome!

Summer Dates for Kids: Please mark your calendars for the children's summer program for 2025. We need adults to help, teens to volunteer and kids to participate. Here are the dates:

VBS: July 28-31, 2025

Children's Musical: August 18-21, 2025

VBS is for children age 3 to grade 5. The musical is for children in kindergarten through grade 6.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophecy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 4:21-30

Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Doctor, cure yourself!" And you will say, "Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum."' And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.' When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.