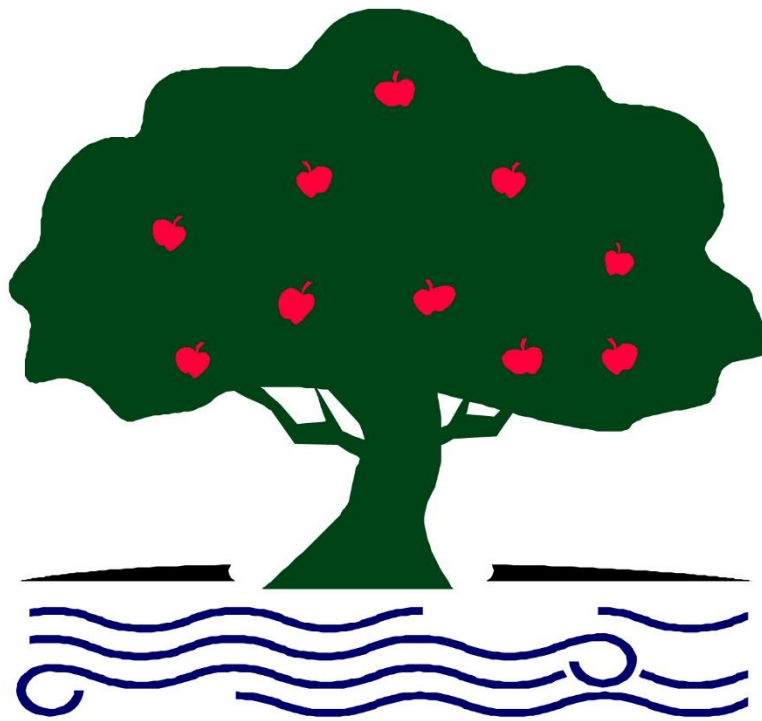


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

February 16, 2025



**They are like trees planted by
streams of water, which yield
their fruit in its season . . .**

P S A L M 1 : 3 , N R S V

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

February 16, 2025

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

10:00 am

Gathering

'In this world there are only two tragedies.

One is not getting what one wants;
the other is getting it.'

- Oscar Wilde

'Although the world is full of suffering,

it is also full of the overcoming of it.'

- Helen Keller

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: With steadfast love and growing faith,

P: We come as the people of God.

L: With prayers of hope and songs of joy,

P: We come to worship God, the source of hope and joy.

L: With thankful hearts and humble prayers,

P: We come to give God our thanks and praise.

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

*HYMN

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Blue #358

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Loving God, we know that in every generation you call forth prophets to proclaim your word. We give you thanks that you are still speaking to us even today. Your Spirit inspires the young to see visions of a new creation and elders to dream of a time not yet known. Yet we confess that we often fail to hear your voice when it comes from an unexpected place. Convinced that we are right, we miss the Good News of your reconciling love. Forgive us, God. Restore us with humility and awaken us anew to your presence and your promise. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: The God of creation is a God of mercy.

P: **God is quick to forgive and God's promise of restoration is for all people.**

L: Friends, let us believe and live the good news of the Gospel.

P: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. 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

Love is Flowing

Love is flowing: love is flowing, love is flowing from the fountain of life;

Love is flowing: love is flowing, love is flowing from the fountain of life.

Grace is flooding: grace is flooding, grace is flooding from the fountain of life.

Grace is flooding: grace is flooding, grace is flooding from the fountain of life.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Jeremiah 17:5-10

PSALM 1 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



Like a tree that's plant - ed by the wa - ter, — we shall not be moved.

L: Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night.

P: They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

L: The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

P: Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. 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: Today we gather at the table of the Lord where ordinary gifts of bread and wine are shared, where a vision for a new heaven and a new earth shine forth for all to see.

P: We come to be filled where once we were hungry.

L: We come to have our thirst quenched where once we were parched.

P: We come to find peace in a broken world.

All: We come and gather around the table so that together we may become God's faithful followers.

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:

Here Is Bread

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain

In this bread there is heal - ing, in this cup is life for - ev - er.
In this mo - ment, by the Spir - it, Christ is with us here.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the refrain, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Be Not Afraid

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain

Be not a - fraid. I go be - fore you al - ways. Come, fol - low
me, and I will give you rest.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the refrain, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. Chord symbols are written above the notes: G, Gsus, G, D, Am7, D, G6, C, G/B on the first staff; Bm, Em, Am, D, G Gsus, G, Gsus, G C/G, G on the second staff. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Choose to Hope

Congregation join on refrain:

In the times of dark - ness, in times of fear, choose to hope,
choose to love, and know that God is near.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the refrain, and the second staff contains the melody for the second 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 6:17-26

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Lord of All Hopefulness

Blue #469

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – African Creed**

We believe in the one High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. God created the human person for happiness in the world. God loves the world and every nation and tribe on the earth. We have known this High God in the darkness, and now we know God in the light.

God promised in the Scriptures to save the world and all the nations and tribes. We believe that God kept all promises by sending Jesus Christ, a person in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left his home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and humankind, showing that the meaning of religion is love. Jesus was rejected by his people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross, and died. He lay buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch him, and on the third day, he rose from the grave.

We believe that all our sins are forgiven by God. We accept the gift of baptism and in the community of faith we live in ways of love and share the bread of life. We announce the good news to all people so long as God gives us breath. We believe that the Spirit is in the world and that God cares for us in life and in death. This we believe. 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.

MISSION MOMENT – Church Camps

Carol Merriman

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

With A Joyful Heart
Arr. by Raymond H. Haan

Jubilee Ringers

*OFFERTORY

We Praise You, O God

Blue #726

*We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.
We lay it before you, we kneel and adore you;
We bless your holy name, glad praises we sing.*

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Generous God, your heart is wide open to us. You have given to us freely and taught us to return to you a portion of what we have. Grant us glad and generous hearts, and help us be as open to you as you are to us. Help us use your gifts wisely and for the benefit of all your people. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior

Black #551

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Lou Greub
Deacons: Cindy Gandrud, Marshall Skule,
Becky Pajac, Kathy Tomlinson,
Paul Shepherd
Organist: Terry Mithun
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Vicki Sippel
Welcomers: JoAnn Lentz, Diane Olson
Coffee
Fellowship: Eunice Filkins, Diane Olson
Counters: Trish Graves, Vicki Sippel

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: Marie Roe
Office Administrator: Missy Luedtke
Nursery Attendant: Kahla Fuller
Custodian: Farnum Fuller

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Feb 9, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 30,880	\$ 100,853
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 63,738

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), 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, (Steve Koecher's father), Lu Lueck, Lee and Alex (friends of Barb Stephens), Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Troy (nephew of Carol Merriman)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our own Alex Plum who competes in his third Birkie cross country ski race next Saturday, go Alex go!
- 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
- For our committees and Church Council who meet on Tuesday, February 18th, may they help us all to be better stewards of God's grace
- 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:

- As we remember Valentine's Day, let us remember those we love as we also remember Jesus' challenge to love even our enemies
- For all those called to be foster parents, may God bless you and your efforts
- 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 recently, it looks fabulous!
- For Evelyn Adele Sitz born to Heather and Danny and grandparents Maxine and Tom on January 10th, who is home and safe and wonderful, thanks be to God!
- For Josh Sippel who graduated from Basic Training at Ft Jackson, SC on February 6 and will now do training at Fort Gregg-Adams located in VA, congratulations and thank you for your service

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Rollie Hall as they mourn, may they 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 Lenten Study: You are invited to participate in a discussion of “Entering the Passion of Jesus” by Amy-Jill Levine. This is a six-week study, **starting on February 26**, focusing on the events of Holy Week. The group will meet **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30**. Books are available in the church office for \$10. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Ash Wednesday: Ash Wednesday will be **Wednesday, March 5th**. Lent is a time of reflection, repentance and preparation. In Lent, we reflect on our lives, not as we want them to be, but as they really are. In Lent, we repent, which does mean thinking less of ourselves, but means changing the parts of our lives that need to be changed. In Lent, we also prepare for the good news of the resurrection at Easter and the events of Holy Week which not only changed the world long ago, but continue to change us today. Join us for the **6:30 pm worship service** which will include both communion and the imposition of ashes.

Prayer Around the Cross: Our Lenten Prayer Around the Cross worship services will resume after Ash Wednesday, March 5, each Wednesday until Holy Week. Join us in the Fellowship Hall at **6:30 pm** for this brief, meaningful, candle-lit service focused on prayer, simple songs and a brief, focused message.

Loving Neighbor

Simpson Shelter Supply Needs: Great buys of 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. 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

New Evening Men’s Group: We will meet **Thurs, Feb 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 18 & Mar 4**

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.

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 25 & Mar 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 **Sycamore on the first Thursday of each month & the Fellowship Hall the other Thursdays**. We have a great time sharing our projects & enjoying each other's company. For more info, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or firstroe@gmail.com

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 **March 10**.

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 info, call Marg Downing at 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Shrimp Boil: The Shrimp Boil Fundraiser for the Back Bay Mission Trip will be held **Tues, Feb 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 & meal set up & clean up at church or online.

Wednesday Meals: On Wednesday nights, we will 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 Tuesday**. You can make a reservation online, the sign-up table or by calling the church office. The menu for Feb 26 is Swedish meatballs, butter and parsley potatoes, vegetable and rolls.

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 Events for Wednesday, February 19:

3:45-5:15 pm Wednesday School

6:30-7:30 pm MS Class

6:30-8:00 pm HS Youth Group

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: Jeremiah 17:5-10

Thus says the LORD: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the LORD. They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.

Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.

The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse—who can understand it? I the LORD test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 6:17-26

He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

‘Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

‘Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

‘Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

‘Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

‘But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

‘Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

‘Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

‘Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.