

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

March 9, 2025



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

March 9, 2025

First Sunday in Lent

10:00 am

Gathering

When people stop believing in God, they do not believe in *nothing*,
they believe in *anything*.

- C.K. Chesterton

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: Our Lenten journey has begun.

P: Let us follow the example of Jesus who...

L: Shows us the true meaning of love.

P: Models for us a new way of living based on grace.

L: Calls us to resist temptation,

P: And embrace God's way of peace.

L: Come let us follow Jesus this Lenten season...

P: As he transforms us into his faithful people.

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

*HYMN

All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

Blue #100

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

P: O God, we're not even hungry, but we are tempted by the best food money can buy...

L: Jesus answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

P: We have what we need, but we want all that our senses can take in, and we want it now...

L: Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"
P: We continue to have to prove ourselves to others, to flaunt our power, our knowledge and our possessions.
 L: Jesus answered, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"
All: Forgive us, Lord. During these 40 days of Lent remind us both of who you are and who we are. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

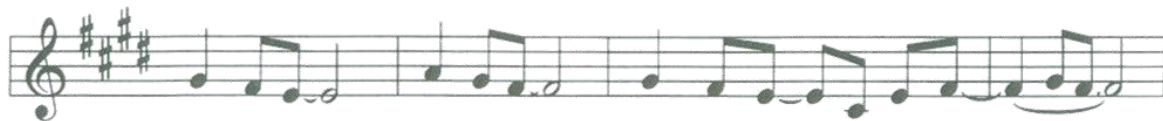
L: God gives us new opportunities each day to start fresh and new.
P: Through God's Spirit we are empowered to celebrate life fully and to appreciate all the gifts of life.
 L: May we be empowered to start over.
P: And may we begin again filled with assurance and hope.
 L: In Christ we are forgiven.
P: 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**

Gloria!



Glo - ri - a! Glo - ri - a! High - est glor - y to You!_____



Glo - ri - a! Glo - ri - a! High - est glor - y to You!



O - pen now our lips and our mouths shall give praise.
 O Lord, rush to help to de - liv - er Your world.
 Mak - er, Spir - it, Friend, You are Great My - ster - y!

Hearing the Word

PSALM 91:1-2, 9-16 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *And he will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.*

L: You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.'

P: Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your dwelling-place, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

L: For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

P: On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.

L: You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

P: Those who love me, I will deliver; I will protect those who know my name.

L: When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them.

P: With long life I will satisfy them, and show them my salvation. 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: Hear the words of our Savior Jesus Christ:

Come to me, all you that are weary and heavy laden for I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest of your souls.

I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.

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 Talents and Tongues Employ

Blue #698

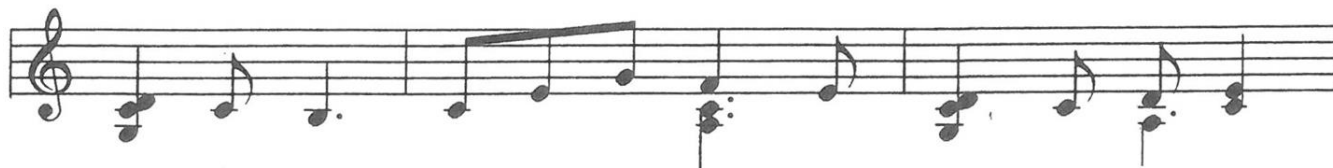
Congregation join on refrain

O Christ, Surround Me

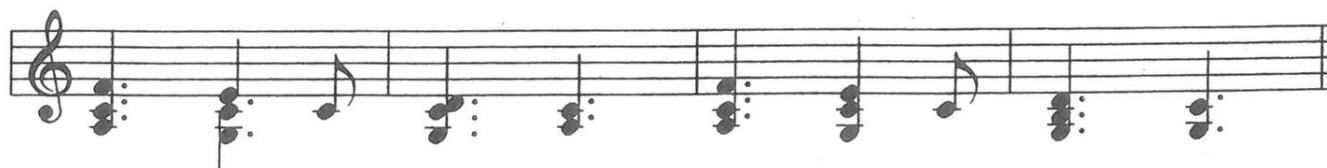
Congregation join on refrain:



God, be the love to search and keep me; God, be the prayer to
 Bind to my - self the Name of Ho - ly, great cloud of wit - nes -
 Bright-ness of sun and glow of moon - light, flash - ing of light - ning,
 Walk - ing be - hind to hem my jour - ney, go - ing a - head to
 Christ in the eyes of all who see me, Christ in the ears that



move my voice; God, be the strength to now up - hold me.
 ses en - fold; proph - ets, a - pos - tles, an - gels wit - ness.
 strength of wind, depth of the sea to soil of plan - et:
 light my way, and from be - neath, a - bove and all ways,
 hear my voice, Christ in the hearts of all who know me:



O Christ, sur - round me, O Christ sur - round me.
 O Christ, sur - round me, O Christ sur - round me.
 O Christ, sur - round me, O Christ sur - round me.
 O Christ, sur - round me, O Christ sur - round me.
 O Christ, sur - round me, O Christ sur - round me.

As We Gather at Your Table

Blue #695

Eat This Bread

*Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and never be hungry.
Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.*

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.)

*Jesus loves me! This I know, as he loved so long ago,
Taking children on his knee, saying, "Let them come to me."
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 4:1-13

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

Blue #252

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

L: We are not alone, we live in God's world.

P: We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust in God. We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER

Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

L: God, remember us in your love, and teach us to pray:

P: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

Your Kingdom come: your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.

For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

For God So Loved the World

Chancel Choir

Arr. by Joseph Martin

*DOXOLOGY

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

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Merciful God, on my own, what I have to give doesn't amount to much in the light of all you have given to me and in the face of so much need. Put together as a congregation, what we offer you here in love is multiplied. Bless these gifts and multiply their usefulness. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

Black #23

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Reprinted music used by permission under the following licenses:
OneLicense.net A-703731; CCLI License 2892021



Join us each Wednesday at 6:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall for our 30-minute Prayer Around the Cross Worship Service preceded by the Family Meal. Reserve dinner by Tuesday night please.

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Tanya Larsen
Deacons: Cindy Gandrud, Paul Shepherd,
Karen Lloyd, Tanya Larsen
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Steve Koecher
Coffee
Fellowship: Merry Widows – St. B's Donuts
Counters: Marie Roe, 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>Mar 2, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,899	\$ 127,682
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 95,607

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'



Thank you to Tim, the snowplow man.
And thanks to all who contributed to
our new tractor/snowblower.
It conquered the snow!

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Jeff (brother-in-law of Janice Healy), Barbara de Souza, Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams), Jim French (father of Missy Linaberry), Arlyn (Steve Koecher's father), Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Melissa Oscanyan, Pope Francis, Peg Steinmetz, Janice Anderson (grandmother of Sarah Plum)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our own Alex Plum who competed in his third Birkie cross country and setting a new personal best record!
- For those who enjoyed the Back Bay Mission Shrimp Boil dinner recently, which raised \$500 for the mission
- For the new evening Men's Group who packed meals at FMSC going to Zambia, thank you for your service!
- For those who will participate in the next Men's Group session that begins the end of March, may we better connect and support one another on our Christian journey
- For our pastors and musicians gearing up for Lenten Prayer Around the Cross worship services on Wednesdays at 6:30 pm, may they help on our Lenten journey toward Holy Week and Easter
- For the return of our Wednesday Night Family Meals which run through Holy Week, may we all be fed!

Prayers for our World:

- For all those whose small daily acts of compassion and grace slowly help change the world (and themselves)
- For those dealing with Parkinson disease, may they be given strength, courage and medical wisdom
- 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, Palestine, Israel and Ukraine, 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 snowplow drivers, God bless your work this past week—whew!
- For the gift of Spring Break in one week!
- For the return of Wednesday night family meals!
- For the return of our Prayer Around The Cross Worship services in the Fellowship Hall during the Wednesdays in Lent, may they be a time of renewal
- For Lily Hodges, daughter of Rachel and Quinn, and granddaughter of Maxine and Tom Sitz, who will be baptized on Sunday, March 23, may she grow in wisdom and faith
- For Josh Sippel who graduated from Basic Training at Ft Jackson, SC on February 6 and then will 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 Sue Taylor, administrative assistant at the Wisconsin Conference UCC office who died after battling cancer this past year, may her family be comforted and she rest in God's strong care
- 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.

Sunday, March 9, 2025

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: The Adult Bible Study group is discussing “Entering the Passion of Jesus” by Amy-Jill Levine. The group will meet **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30**. Books are available in the church office for \$10.00. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Prayer Around the Cross: Our Lenten Prayer Around the Cross worship services resume 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

One Great Hour of Sharing is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ within the Wider Church Ministries. We need to support this ministry, maybe now more than ever. Envelopes are in the pews and on the sign-up table. Thank you for your generous support. - Mission Education Committee

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: BFLK takes donations of new and gently used winter clothing year round. It’s a great time to shop sales of winter clothing and boots for children ages newborn to 18 years. For more information go to <https://www.basicsforlocalkids.org/>. 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. It is held at church **Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am to 3pm.**

Loving Self

New Evening Men’s Group: We had a great start to our first evening Men’s Group with two gatherings plus a service trip to Feed My Starving Children. Thanks to all who participated! We will start a second three-session gathering of our church guys in late March and April as detailed below. During these second gatherings, we will be looking at three parts of our Christian faith—grace, vocation and prayer. Please see Pastor Chris for details.
- **Thursdays, March 27, April 10, and April 24 starting at 6:30 pm at The Garage Bikes and Brews**

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 **March 18 & April 1 & 15.** Join us!

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 **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 fristroe@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 meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at the River Falls Public Library and the Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at Luther Memorial Church at 6:30 pm. Our church WISE Team meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Wednesday Meals: 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, the sign-up table or by calling the church office. The menu for March 12 is chicken marsala, rice, asparagus, salad.

Learning Community Event: Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Bonhoeffer was a pastor and theologian in Germany during World War II. He was also an anti-Nazi dissident who was a founding member of the Confessing Church movement, a group dedicated to resisting efforts by the government to use churches as a pro-Nazi force to gain support and legitimacy for its goals. Bonhoeffer was arrested, imprisoned, and ultimately executed for his association with the resistance movement. Bonhoeffer authored important theological works included *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Letters and Papers From Prison*, published posthumously. Bonhoeffer famously argued that Christians should not withdraw from the world and its challenges, but rather act within the world guided by a commitment to justice and an understanding of the necessity of divine suffering. Our presenter will be Dr. Lori Brandt Hale, Professor of Religion in the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Augsburg University in Minneapolis. The evening will be **Tuesday, April 29 and will begin at 6:30 pm.** Dessert will be part of the event, so please tell us you are coming by registering either on the list on the sign-up table or online.

Youth Events

Youth Events for Wednesday, March 12:

3:45-5:15 pm Wednesday School

6:30-7:30 pm Middle School Class with Pastor Stacy in the Youth Room

6:30-7:30 pm High School Youth Group with Alex in Fellowship Hall - **BOARD GAME NIGHT!** Join us for a fun evening where we will play some of our favorite board games. While playing games, Alex will be sharing information about upcoming youth group and trip opportunities and he wants to hear your thoughts and availability. If you have a favorite group board game, bring it along! Friends are always 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 completed grade 5. The musical is for children in kindergarten through completed grade 6. Emma Cruciani will be the director.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 10:8-13

But what does it say?

‘The word is near you,
on your lips and in your heart’

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, ‘No one who believes in him will be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone.”’

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, ‘To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’ Jesus answered him, ‘It is written,

“Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.”’

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written,

“He will command his angels concerning you,
to protect you”,

and

“On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’

Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.