

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

May 4, 2025



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

*Confirmation Sunday
Third Sunday of Easter*

May 4, 2025

10:00 am

Gathering

"The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children."
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"Be who you were created to be, and you will set the world on fire."
- St. Catherine of Siena

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: Listen. God is calling.

P: What is God calling us to do?

L: To be the church.

P: What should the church do?

L: Love. Serve. Forgive. Act. Bless. Welcome.

P: How do we do this?

L: By following in the steps of Jesus our Lord.

**P: So let us be the church today as we learn what it means to follow Jesus here
and now.**

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

***HYMN**

Christ Is Alive!

Blue #312

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: I lift my eyes unto the hills – from where does my help come?

P: Forgive me, O God, when I believe my only help is in my own strength.

L: My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.
P: **Forgive me, O God, when I believe that my only hope is in the quickness of my own mind.**
L: The Lord watches over you. The Lord is at your right hand.
P: **Forgive me, O God, when I believe that my future is in my hands alone.**
L: The Lord will keep you from all harm; God will watch over your life.
P: **Forgive me when I believe that I can live without your grace.**
All: **The Lord will watch over my coming and going both now and forevermore. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Hear these words:
P: **God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and swift to bless.**
L: Believe these words:
P: **In Christ we are forgiven and set free for new life here and now.**
L: Live these words:
P: **Let us leave our burdens behind and embrace God's abundant life today. Amen.**
L: May the peace of the Lord be with you all.
P: **And also with you.**

***PASSING OF THE PEACE** (Please greet one another with signs of peace)

***GLORIA**

Come, All You People

***Come, all you people, come and praise the Most High,
Come, all you people, come and praise the Most High,
Come, all you people, come and praise the Most High, Come now and worship the Lord.
Come, all you people, come and praise the Savior,
Come, all you people, come and praise the Savior,
Come, all you people, come and praise the Savior, Come now and worship the Lord.***

Hearing the Word

PSALM 30 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

***R Sing praise to God who has shaped
and sustained all creation.***

L: I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me.
P: **O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.**

- L: O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.
- P: **Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.**
- L: For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime.
- P: **Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning. R**
- L: As for me, I said in my prosperity, 'I shall never be moved.'
- P: **By your favor, O LORD, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed.**
- L: To you, O LORD, I cried, and to the LORD I made supplication: 'What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?
- P: **Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me! O LORD, be my helper!'**
- L: You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent.
- P: **O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever. R**

Celebrating the Meal

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

The Invitation to the Meal

- L: Sisters and Brothers in Christ, this is the table where our Savior Jesus Christ wants to feed us on the Bread of Life. Let us feast on his grace that forgives us. Let us feast on his peace that calms us. Let us feast on his love that frees us. Come just as you are, and be fed by him.

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:

Lead Me, Guide Me

Blue #498

Rain Down

Congregation join on refrain:

Rain down, rain down, rain down your love on your people.

Rain down, rain down, rain down your love, God of life.

Here I Am, Lord

Blue #559

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.)

Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.

Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.

Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory;

Children of the Lord.

THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION

L: Friends in Christ, we all are received into the church through the sacrament of baptism. These young people have found nurture and support in the midst of the family of Christ. Through prayer and study, they have been led by the Holy Spirit to affirm their baptism and to claim in our presence their covenantal relationship with Christ and the members of the church. They are here for service to Jesus Christ, using the gifts which the Holy Spirit bestows.

QUESTIONS OF THE CANDIDATES

PRAYER

ACT OF CONFIRMATION

L: Strengthen, O God, these your servants, with your heavenly grace that they may continue in your way forever; and daily increase in them your Holy Spirit, until you receive them at last in your eternal home.

All: Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFIRMATION

All: O Merciful God, we rejoice in the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in the Spirit's power to awaken us to new truth and to inspire us to venture into the fullness of life. We give you thanks that these young people have been moved to affirm their baptism. Help them to live not for themselves but for Christ and those whom Christ loves. Keep them steady and abounding in hope, never giving up, pressing toward the goal of life with you in Jesus Christ. Amen.

ADDRESS

L: By your baptism, you were made one with us in the body of Christ, the church. Today we rejoice in your pilgrimage of faith which has brought you to this time and place. We celebrate your presence in this household of faith.

WELCOME

L: Let us, the members of First Congregational United Church of Christ, express our welcome and affirm our mutual ministry in Christ.

P: **We promise you our continuing friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of the church of Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge and love and be witnesses of our risen Savior.**

M: In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of your church, First Congregational United Church of Christ, we extend to you the hand of Christian love.

**Calpurnia Stacie Bastien, Casey Clifford Beatty,
Evelyn Tangcan Myklebust**

*The crosses presented to our Confirmands were hand-made
by Bob Johnson, a church member.*

GOSPEL LESSON

John 21:1-19

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore

Black #173

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – from the Iona Ecumenical Community in Scotland**

L: Let us affirm our faith.

P: We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of the One God, maker and sustainer of earth, sea and sky. Born of Mary, faithful to the God of Abraham and Sarah, Jesus healed the sick, served the poor, and proclaimed heaven on earth. Condemned by the religious, crucified by the state, He died but transformed even death and rose to life everlasting. He blessed the disciples with his Holy Spirit and sent them forth, east and west, north and south. We commit ourselves to Jesus, to one another as brothers and sisters and to the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE PRAYERS & LORD’S PRAYER

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

Upon This Rock
Arr. by Pepper Choplin

Chancel Choir

***OFFERTORY**

Now Thank We All Our God

*Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom his world rejoices;
Who, from our mother’s arms, has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

God of all Creation, we offer our gifts in gratitude for all that we have been given. Use our gifts and our lives with mercy and grace, that through us – others might see you. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

Go to the World!

Blue #553

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Confirmands
Deacons: Karen Lloyd, Cindy Gandrud,
Marshall Skule, Ann Nelson,
Jena Most
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Casey Beatty
Trustee: Rick Price
Coffee
Fellowship: Deacons
Counters: Marie Roe, Scott Nelson
*Altar table flowers are given by Traci
Hagberg in memory of Jean Hagberg's
birthday.*

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>Apr 27, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 15,120	\$ 205,162
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 180,591

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:

Barbara de Souza, Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams), Jim French (father of Missy Linaberry), Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Janice Anderson (grandmother of Sarah Plum), Marc Otto, Margaret (wife of Don Baumann), Judy Schierts (sister of JoAnn Lentz), Glen Corliss (brother of Raelle Jorae), Nigel (brother-in-law of Marshall Skule), Dave Mountain

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those being confirmed this Sunday, Calpurnia Bastien, Casey Beatty and Evie Myklebust, may they grow in faith, service and love
- For those who enjoyed Earth Fest at UWRF, that it may kindle in each of us a deeper commitment to care for God's good creation
- For those who participated in the Bonhoeffer Learning Community, may his faith and courage inspire us today
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she awaits a B+ kidney donor
- For our choir and bell group gearing up for Music Sunday on Sunday, May 18th

Prayers for our World:

- For all who are called to be mothers as we celebrate Mother's Day next Sunday, may they grow in love
- For all those whose small daily acts of compassion and grace slowly help change the world (and themselves)
- For our nation as economic and social uncertainty takes its toll, may we do better
- For the hope of peace in Gaza, Palestine, Israel, Sudan 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 the last Wednesday School gathering this past week which ended with dirt and worms (talk to a kid about this wonderful tradition!)
- For our choir and bell choir as they gear up for Music Sunday on Sunday, May 18, thank you for sharing your gifts
- For the new River Falls Fire Chief, our own Justin Wilson, congratulations and thank you for pursuing this calling!
- For all who helped serve the funeral reception for Peg Steinmetz this week, you are angels
- For Josh Sippel who will be graduating from Advanced Individual Training on May 19 from Fort Gregg-Adams in VA, and who will be using that training with the Wisconsin Army National Guard
- For Mark and Laura Anderson who did our three church garden pots with an Easter theme, they are lovely

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Glenn Kees who died peacefully surrounded by his family in Oconomowoc this past week (funeral details are pending), may his wife Midge and family be comforted
- For the family of Peg Steinmetz who died recently and whose Memorial Service was Friday, May 2nd, may she rest in peace
- For the family of Dave Mountain, our former custodian, whose son Steve died in a car accident this week, may his family be given strength and faith as they gather Saturday, June 21 to remember his life
- For the family of Leah Gavin, pharmacist at Freeman Pharmacy for many years, who died suddenly, may our community wrap our arms around her family
- For Pope Francis, that we may reflect on his legacy of supporting the vulnerable and caring for the earth
- For the family of Eunice, sister of Barb Stephens who died recently, may she rest in God's strong care
- For all those who mourn, especially the families of Brian Healy, Wayne Revels, Arlyn Koecher (father of Steve), Rollie Hall (husband of Joan), 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, May 4, 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!

Summer Worship: During the summer months, our worship moves to 9:30 am starting Memorial Day Weekend and going through Labor Day Weekend. Coffee Fellowship continues, but Sunday School is off. See you this summer!

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 Wednesday Adult Study group is reading and discussing *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Copies of the book are available in the church office for \$14.00 each. The group meets **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30**. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

Volunteers Needed: ONP needs helpers setting up for Our Neighbors' Day Yard Sale and Community Meal. On May 7, we need a few people to help load up borrowed tables (at First Congregational). Then on May 8, help is needed setting up the yard sale and cleaning up at the end. The yard sale is a freewill donation sale - people may pay if they are able. The free community meal starts at 4pm and goes until 6pm. Everyone is invited!

Diaper Drive Returns! In honor of the parents in our lives, the Mission Education Committee is again offering you the opportunity to contribute diapers to the RF Food Pantry, Our Neighbors' Place, and Turning Point. These three local organizations serve folks in dire need, folks who need diapers for their babies and infants. And diapers are expensive, no doubt. If you can add a package to your own grocery shopping, or find good sales at other stores, you'll see how expensive they can be - imagine the challenge for parents living in their cars, or on a friend's sofa, or without a job in this difficult time. Please help them if you can - and encourage your friends to help, too! (Mission Ed has also found a few other local groups to help out for some other months; would your work place, social or community groups, or extended family also be able to help?)

Red Cross Blood Drive: The next scheduled Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church will be on **Wednesday, May 21, from 10:00 am–4:00 pm**. Please call 1-800-733-2767 or visit www.redcrossblood.org and enter: firstcongregationalrf to schedule an appointment.

Simpson Shelter Supply Needs: Underwear - men's & women's, women's 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.

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

Calling All Plant Lovers! The Garden Gurus are looking for one or two more people to help with the church gardens this summer. Duties include watering outdoor flowerpots and sign garden, and occasional weeding and deadheading perennials. No experience necessary! For more information, text or call Lu Lueck (715-781-0138) or Sally Steneman (651-208-4128).

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, May 21 at 1:00 pm at Green Mill in Hudson, WI.** All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

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 **May 6 & 20.**

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 lunch. The next meetings will be **May 13 & 27.**

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 **May 12.**

WISE Team: NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group meets the 2nd & 4th Thursdays 6:30pm at the River Falls Public Library & Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at Luther Memorial Church at 6:30pm. The WISE Team meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Softball News: Once again our church will sponsor a softball team in the River Falls Church Family League. The family league is a co-ed division that allows players to play at the age of 14. The co-ed description requires teams to have three women on the field at all times. The games are played on Monday nights at Hoffman Park. Games will begin the first Monday of June and continue until the middle of August. Practices will begin the first of May. Come join in the fun and laughs. If you are interested in playing on our team, please sign up on the sheet in the gathering area or online. If you have questions, contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman2234b@gmail.com

Holding on to Hope – Thurs, May 15, 6:30-8:00 pm: Presented by NAMI St. Croix Family Support Team in the Fellowship Hall. Join the group of family members who will share what family support can be as they discuss dealing with trauma, coping strategies, empathy and hope. Any questions, contact Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Family Resource Center Workers: The Christian Education Committee is looking for one or two more people who are willing to work with the Family Resource Center. Tasks include: managing the book collection, shelving books, arranging display books according to season, helping children and families to be connected to the Resource Center and put it to good use. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Pastor Stacy.

Youth Events

End of the Year Youth Celebration: Each year, our 6-12th graders end the year with bowling at St Croix Lanes. This year our gathering will be **Wednesday, May 7 at 6:30 pm**. Pizza will be served, the lanes will be open, Alex, Stacy and PC will be there and we will see who gets high score and low score! Join us!

Summer Dates for Kids: Dates for the 2025 children's summer programs are:

VBS: July 28-31, 2025

Children's Musical: August 18-21, 2025

VBS is for children age 3 to completed grade 5. We will need adult and teen volunteers for VBS.

The musical, *Malice in the Palace: The Story of Esther* is for children in kindergarten through completed grade 6. Emma Cruciani will be the director.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 21:1-19

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.' He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'