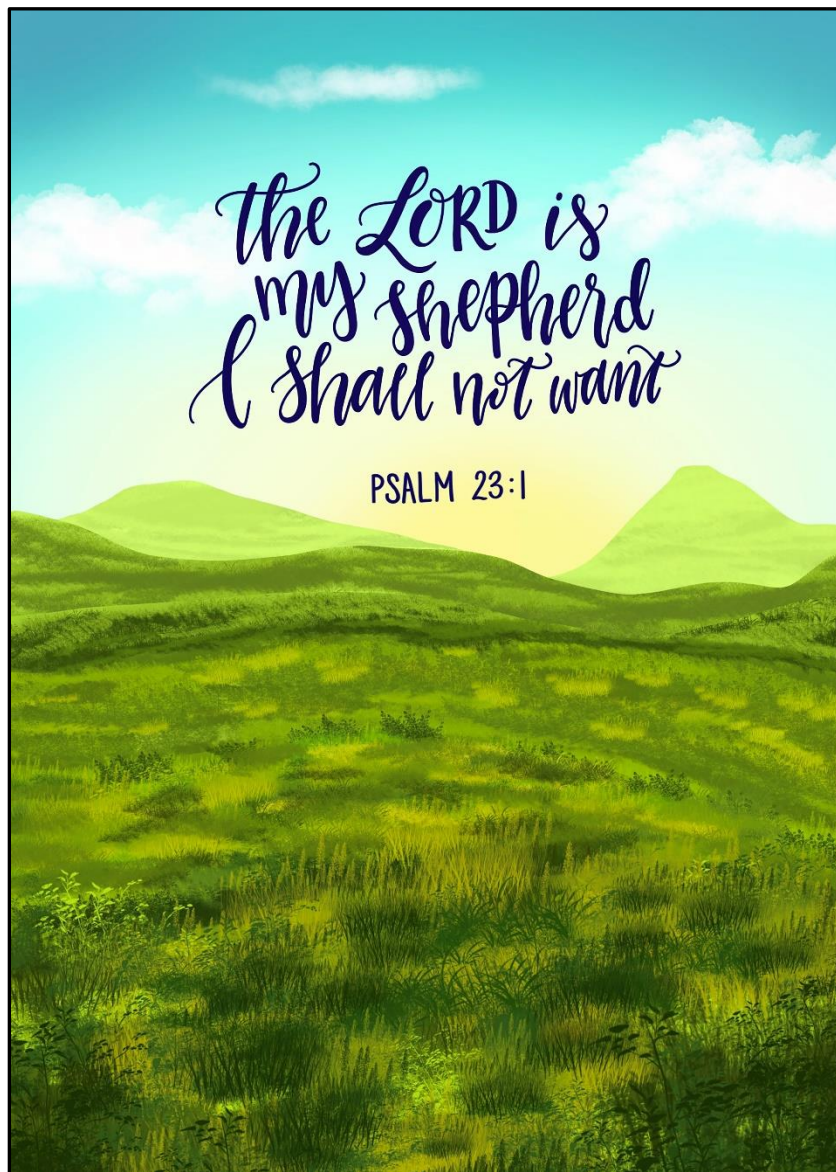


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

May 11, 2025



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

*Mother's Day
Fourth Sunday of Easter*

May 4, 2025

10:00 am

Gathering

"Motherhood is the biggest gamble in the world. It is the glorious life force.
It's huge and scary — it's an act of infinite optimism."
Gilda Radner

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: God is like the gentle shepherd,

P: **Leading us beyond our wants,**

L: Leading us beyond our fears,

P: **Leading us to a place of rest,**

L: Where we sing the music of God's love

P: **And feel new strength to walk through the valleys and shadows of life.**

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

***HYMN**

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Blue #358

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Like a shepherd with his sheep, Jesus calls us his own.

P: **But we do not always hear.**

L: Jesus calls us to follow him,

P: **Yet we prefer to make our own way.**

L: Jesus offers eternal life,

P: **Yet we choose our worldly attachments.**

All: **Loving Messiah, whose knowledge of God surpasses any of ours, forgive us
when we do not follow you. Give us ears to hear your loving call, that we might
be made one with you. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

- L: The shepherd who calls us to follow him also leads us beside still waters and restores our souls.
- P: **He offers us gifts beyond our imagining. His love is without limit.**
- L: Brothers and sisters , God's mercy is embodied in the one we call Christ, who leads us into life. 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 (Sung twice)

Hal - le - lu - ya! We sing your prais-es, all our

hearts are filled with glad - ness. Hal - le - lu - ya! We sing your

prais-es, all our hearts are filled with glad - ness.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

PSALM 23 (by Bobby McFerrin)

Acts 9:36-43

Chancel Choir

Celebrating the Meal

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

The Invitation to the Meal

L: Come to the table of the Good Shepherd. Come and listen to his voice as he calls you. Come and see how he sets a table and invites you to join him. Come and hear how even though we fail him, he is faithful with us. Come just as you are, and join him at his table.

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:

Blest Are They

Blue #666

Congregation join on refrain

Refrain

Re - joice and be glad! Bless - ed are you;
ho - ly are you! Re - joice and be glad!
Yours is the king - dom of God!

You Are My All in All

Blue #427

Congregation join on refrain



Je - sus, Lamb of God, wor - thy is your name!



Je - sus, Lamb of God, wor - thy is your name!

How Can I Keep From Singing

Blue #424

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.)

*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.*

GOSPEL LESSON

John 10:22-30

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Blue #440

***STATEMENT OF FAITH (Based on 23rd Psalm)**

**You, O God, are our Shepherd.
You provide everything we need.
You let us rest in green meadows
and lead us beside quiet streams.
You renew our strength,
and guide us in ways that bring honor to Your name.
Even when we walk through difficult valleys,
we will not fear,
for you never are far away—
protecting and comforting,
guarding and guiding every step we take.
You prepare a feast for us
in the presence of our enemies.
You welcome us as friends
and lavish your blessings on us.
We know that your goodness and unfailing love
will continue to pursue us all the days of our lives,
and that after our lives here are over,
we will spend eternity in your presence.**

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 *We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace* Chancel Choir

***DOXOLOGY**

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

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Good Shepherd, **guide us to the places where we should be and nourish us with food that restores our spirits. Lead us to abundant life here and now. Bless the gifts we offer that we may be your faithful followers in all we do. Amen.**

Sending

*HYMN

Go, My Children, With My Blessing

Blue #719

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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To those who gave birth this year to their first child—we celebrate with you

To those who lost a child this year – we mourn with you

To those who are in the trenches with little ones every day and wear the badge of food stains –
we appreciate you

To those who experienced loss through miscarriage—we mourn with you

To those who walk the hard path of infertility, fraught with pokes, prods, and disappointment –
we walk with you.

To those who are foster moms, mentor moms, and spiritual moms – we need you

To those who have warm and close relationships with your children – we celebrate with you

To those who have disappointment, heart ache, and distance with your children – we sit with
you

To those who lost their mothers this year – we grieve with you

To those who experienced disappointment at the hands of your own mother – we acknowledge
your experience

To those who lived through driving tests, medical tests, and the overall testing of motherhood –
we are better for having you in our midst

To those who are single and long to be married and mothering your own children – we mourn
that life has not turned out the way you longed for it to be

To those who step-parent – we walk with you on these complex paths

To those who envisioned lavishing love on grandchildren yet that dream is not to be--we grieve
with you

To those who will have emptier nests in the upcoming year – we grieve and rejoice with you

To those who placed children up for adoption — we commend you for your selflessness

And to those who are pregnant with new life, both expected and surprising –we anticipate with
you

This Mother's Day, we walk with you. Mothering is not for the faint of heart and we have real
heroes in our midst. We remember you.

From Amy Young "An Open Letter to Pastors on Mother's Day"

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Marie Roe
Deacons: Karen Lloyd, Kathy Tomlinson,
Becky Pajac, Ann Nelson,
Cindy Gandrud
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Dennis and Lynn Linder
Trustee: Steve Koecher
Coffee

Fellowship: Duane Church Birthday Cake
Counters: Jane Truesdil, Mark Anderson
*Altar table flowers are given by Margo
Bartness in celebration of Mother's Day and
the Merry Widows.*

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>May 4, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 4,780	\$ 207,014
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 191,214

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, Duane Church, Heather Williams

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our choir and bell group gearing up for Music Sunday on Sunday, May 18th, may you joyfully lead us in song
- For those confirmed last Sunday, Casey Beatty, Evie Myklebust and Calpernia Bastien, may they grow in faith, service and love
- For those enjoyed Earth Fest, that it may it 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 church mowing team—Joel Larsen, Ryan Luedtke, Laura and Mark Anderson and Larry Peterson, we appreciate you!

Prayers for our World:

- For all who are called to be mothers as we celebrate Mother's Day, may they grow in love and appreciation
- For all those whose small daily acts of compassion and grace slowly help change the world (and themselves)
- For our nation as economic, political 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 our choir and bell choir as they gear up for Music Sunday on Sunday, May 18, thank you for sharing your gifts
- For Duane Church who celebrated his 92nd birthday on Saturday, May 10th and is sharing his birthday cake with us during Coffee Fellowship but who is also recovering from a broken hip, may you heal quickly
- For our Garden Geeks Lu Lueck and Norma Revels who were out in force this week getting our garden ready and for Louie Filkins who made the new archway in our Memorial Garden, God bless you all!
- For the new River Falls Fire Chief, our own Justin Wilson, congratulations and thank you for pursuing this calling!
- For Josh Sippel who will be graduating from Advanced Individual Training on May 19, 2025, from Fort Gregg-Adams in VA, and who will be using that training with the Wisconsin Army National Guard
- For Marjorie Faulks who will celebrate her 102nd birthday on Saturday, June 14th with a party at St Croix Lanes from 1-4pm, you are an inspiration!

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Glenn Kees who died peacefully surrounded by his family in Oconomowoc and whose Memorial Gathering is 1pm on Thursday, June 12th, may his wife Midge and family be comforted
- For the family of Dave Mountain, our former custodian, whose son Steve died in a car accident, may his family be given strength and faith as they gather Saturday, June 21 to remember his life
- For all those who mourn, especially the families of Leah Gavin, Peg Steinmetz, Brian Healy, Eunice (sister of Barb Stephens), 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.

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!

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

Strengthen The Church Offering: This offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. **By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ.** Thank you for your support, Mission Education Committee.

Diaper Drive: 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 who need diapers for their babies and infants. 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. Please help them if you can - and encourage your friends to help, too! The Food Pantry and Turning Point especially need sizes 4 and 5 diapers (and wipes) for the bigger kids. (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: Men's T-Shirts Sizes M, XL, XXL, XXXL, Bras - all sizes, Personal Size Body Lotion, Personal Size Baby Oil, Nail Care Kits, Men's and Women's Shower Shoes, Textured/Natural Hair Products, Personal Size Hair Conditioner, Personal Size Toothpaste, Umbrellas, Good buys on out-of-season clothing. All items MUST BE NEW. There is a box at the church 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).

VBS Volunteers: We need adult and teen workers. VBS will be July 28–31, 9:00–11:30 am. To volunteer, please sign up at church or online.

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 20 & June 3.**

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 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 **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: Let the season begin! **June 2nd is our first game at 7:45 pm at Hoffman Park. Practices will begin on Monday, May 12 at 6:30 pm at the Greenwood Elementary practice fields.** We will practice again on May 19 and one more time during Memorial Day week. The roster is still open for more players, and we would encourage you to join the team. Our players' ages range from high school to kids in their early 60's wishing they didn't ache so much the next morning. You don't have to be a professional, but rather someone who likes to play softball, enjoys a little exercise and have a few laughs. The softball team is part of the River Falls Church Family League that is a co-ed division which allows players to play at the age of 14 and requires teams to have three women on the field. The games are played on Monday nights at Hoffman Park. Come join in the fun! 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.

Journey House Young Adult Gathering: You are invited to the Young Adult Gathering sponsored by Journey House in partnership with local congregations. There will be food and games! The event is on **Thurs, May 15 at 6:00 pm at Journey House** (143 E. Cascade Ave. River Falls). To find out more and to register, go to their website: <https://journeyhousecampusministry.org/>

Youth Events

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.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Acts 9:36-43

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 10:22-30

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."