

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

May 25, 2025



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

May 25, 2025

Sixth Sunday of Easter

9:30 am

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| Gathering |
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Peace begins with a smile. - Mother Teresa

Peace is a journey of a thousand miles, and it must be taken one step at a time.
- Lyndon B. Johnson

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| <p>Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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. | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Please stop at the welcome station for a gift.- Please note our worship service is livestreamed. |
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GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Holy God, forever seeking and always teaching:

P: **Open our minds to the truth of your care;**

L: Open our hearts to the depth of your love;

P: **Open our lips to share stories of faith;**

L: Open our hands to create beauty, do justice and show kindness;

P: **Open our souls to the breath of your Spirit;**

L: Open our mouths to sing boldly your praises.

P: **Open our very lives that we may be disciples of Jesus.**

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

***HYMN**

For the Beauty of the Earth

Blue #40

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Holy and Life Giving God, when we have been fearful and afraid,

P: **Bring new life!**

L: When we have failed to be agents of your peace and love,

P: **Bring new life!**

L: When we have been stubborn and hard-hearted,

P: **Bring new life!**

L: When we have been petty and short-sighted,
P: **Bring new life!**
L: When we have not been generous with the gifts given to us,
P: **Bring new life!**
L: Come among us, God of Resurrection,
P: **And bring new life! Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: No matter the situation or problem or trouble, God is always with us. God is always ready to,
P: **Receive and redeem us.**
L: God is always willing to,
P: **Renew and restore us.**
L: God is always able to,
P: **Refresh and re-birth us.**
L: Let us live then as God's graceful people. 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**

Glory, glory hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down.
Glory, glory hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down.
I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down.
I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down.

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| Hearing the Word |
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SCRIPTURE LESSON

Acts 16:9-15

PSALM 67 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *Sing praise to God, who has shaped and sustains all creation!*

L: May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.
P: **Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.**
L: Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.
P: **Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.**

L: The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.

P: May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere God. R

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| Proclaiming the Word |
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GOSPEL LESSON

John 14:23-29

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

*HYMN

When Peace Like a River

Blue #428

*STATEMENT OF FAITH (attributed to St. Francis of Assisi)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. 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

Wade In The Water

Calpernia Bastien

*OFFERTORY



***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Holy God, **with great joy we offer these gifts to you. You have blessed us richly and poured out your generosity and love on us without restraint. Bless these gifts and use them to spread your light into the world. Amen.**

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

The Invitation to the Meal

L: We are here because Jesus has called us – strangers and friends, locals and visitors, believers and doubters, the certain and the curious. It is always a mixed company that Jesus gathers and invites to his table where, in bread and wine, he meets us and through him we, who are different, are joined to each other. So come, not because you understand, but because you are understood. Come, not because of how you feel, but because God has food for you. Come, not because you deserve a place, but because Jesus invites you, just as you are.

The Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.
P: **And also with you.**
L: Lift up your hearts.
P: **We lift them up to the Lord.**
L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
P: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**
L: It is right and good always to give thanks...

The Words of Institution

L: We praise your name as we remember the mystery of faith...
All: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Prayer of Consecration

Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

Let Us Break Bread Together

Blue #699

Congregation join on refrain

You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

Blue #705

Congregation join on refrain

As the Grains of Wheat

Refrain

As the grains of wheat once scat-tered on the hill were
gath-ered in - to one to be - come our bread;
so may all your peo - ple from all the ends of earth be
gath - ered in - to one in you.

The musical notation for the Refrain is written on a single staff in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 4/4 time. It consists of four lines of music, each corresponding to a line of lyrics. The melody is simple and melodic, with a final cadence at the end of the fourth line.

Verses

1. As this cup of bless - ing is shared with-in our midst,
2. Let this be a fore - taste of all that is to come when
may we share the pres - ence of your love.
all cre - a - tion shares this feast with you.

The musical notation for the Verses is written on a single staff in treble clef, key of D major, and 4/4 time. It consists of two lines of music, each corresponding to a line of lyrics. The melody is simple and melodic, with a final cadence at the end of the second line. The lyrics are numbered 1 and 2, indicating two different verses.

In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful

***In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice!
Look to God, do not be afraid; lift up your voices, the Lord is near;
lift up your voices, the Lord is near.***

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.

*HYMN

Now Let Us From This Table Rise

Blue #715

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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Diaper Drive

May 11 - June 15

We are collecting your donations from
Mother's Day to Father's Day.

We are in need of:

All Diaper Sizes

(especially sizes 4 and 5)

Baby Wipes

Donations will go to Our Neighbors' Place,
Turning Point and River Falls Food Pantry

First Congregational Church
110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Rebecca Ferguson
Deacons: Brian Miller, Loral Keil,
Tanya Larsen, Karen Lloyd,
Laura Anderson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Louie Filkins
Coffee
Fellowship: Carole Mottaz
Counters: Marie Roe, Dennis Linder
*Altar table flowers are given by Margo
Bartness in thankfulness for 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 18, 2025</u> | <u>Year to Date</u> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| General Fund Income* | \$ 6,701 | \$ 230,714 |
| General Fund Operational Needs | \$ 10,623 | \$ 212,460 |

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), Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Janice Anderson (grandmother of Sarah Plum), Marc Otto, 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, Jan Hansen

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our high school seniors as they gear up for graduation on Sunday, June 1, may you be given strength and wisdom as you move toward your next steps
- For Rose Rude who retired from UWRF and Rene Bylander who retired from CVTC, may you enjoy retirement!
- For Lori Nitz as she moves to Oregon, WI to be closer to family after over 50 years of living in River Falls, may you move safely and make new connections - we will miss you!
- 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 those cleaning up after spring storms and tornadoes across the Midwest, may you be given strength and the help of neighbors
- For those currently serving in our armed forces and their families, may we appreciate their sacrifices
- 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 Katie Krueger and Hunter Pesik who will be married on June 14th, may you keep growing in love
- For Rich and Shari Clymer celebrating their 53rd wedding anniversary on June 22, may your love continue to grow
- For those who worked at our church camps getting things ready for the program year – Carol Merriman, Tim Bylander, Lu Lueck, Norma Revels and Dan Rude – God bless your work
- For our Garden Geeks keeping our church gardens looking great 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 & thank you for pursuing this calling!
- 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 Marjorie Faulks who will celebrate her 102nd birthday on Saturday, June 14th with a party at St Croix Lanes from 1-3pm, 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, with a reception to follow, 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 Nursery Help Needed: During the summer months, our church nursery is staffed by volunteers. Please sign up to help in the church nursery. Summer worship time moves to 9:30 am and the nursery is open from 9:15 to 10:45 am. Please contact the church office for more information. Sign up at church or online.

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?)

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 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

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.

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 **June 3 & 17.**

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 27 & June 10 & 24.**

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

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 be at the Greenwood Elementary practice fields. 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

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 16:9-15

During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 14:23-29

Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.