

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

June 22, 2025



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

June 22, 2025

Second Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

“Perhaps because our culture and politics have gone so off course, with values so contrary to those of Jesus, more and more people intuitively recognize that His vision of God's kingdom - a new world of compassion, justice, integrity and peace - is the Good News they've been searching and waiting for.”

- Tony Campolo, Red Letter Christians: A Citizen's Guide to Faith and Politics

<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: There is something deeper than trouble.

P: **It is God's amazing grace, carrying, lifting, holding us in all seasons.**

L: There is something more powerful than despair.

P: **It is God's amazing love; seeing us through dark nights, waves of sadness, mountains of grief.**

L: There is something longer lasting than pain.

P: **It is God's healing touch; bringing us hope, leading us to joy, teaching us to sing.**

All: **Come let us raise our voices in praise to the Living God who leads us into life!**

***HYMN**

Rain Down

Refrain



The musical notation is written on a single staff in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the staff, with some lines having multiple verses. The hymn concludes with a double bar line and the instruction 'to Refrain'.

Rain down, rain down, rain down your love on your peo - ple. Rain down,

11
rain down, rain down your love, God of life. 1 Faith - ful and
2 We who re -
3 God of crea -

18
true is the word of our God. All of God's works are so
vere and find hope in our God live in the kind - ness and
a - tion, we long for your truth; you are the wa - ter of

23
wor - thy of trust. God's mer - cy falls on the just and the
joy of God's wing. God will pro - tect us from dark - ness and
life for our thirst. Grant that your love and your peace touch our

28
right; full of God's love is the earth.
death; God will not leave us to starve.
hearts, all of our hope lies in you.

to Refrain

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of Earth and Sky, we give thanks for your goodness. With our eyes, we see your love for beauty. With our ears we hear your love of music. With our hearts we know your love for people. With painful awareness, we know how often we have participated in the scarring of your beautiful world. Give us eyes to behold your creation and hands to revere each part. Give us ears tuned to tears and laughter, and a clean heart to act kindly and speak justly. Through Christ, renew us and our world. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: In Christ, God comes to free us.

P: Let us live then as free people and be at peace. 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**

He Came Down

He came down that we may have love; He came down that we may have love;

He came down that we may have love; hallelujah forever more.

He came down that we may have peace; He came down that we may have peace;

He came down that we may have peace; hallelujah forever more.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Galatians 3:23-29

PSALM 95:1-7 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *All things bright and beautiful, all creations great and small.*

All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.

L: O come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

P: Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to God with songs of praise! For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

L: In God's hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are also God's.

P: The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed.

L: O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

P: For the Lord is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. **R**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 8:26-39

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Blue #358

***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 *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*

Deb Hoffman

***OFFERTORY** *We Praise You, O God*

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

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Gracious God, Jesus promised his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift that remains as powerful and transformative today as it was on the first Pentecost. With generous and thankful hearts, we offer our gifts to you – our time, treasure and talent. Use us and these offerings for your purposes and glory. Amen.

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: Jesus came to seek the lost and heal the sick, to free the captives and restore the broken. People came to him looking for wholeness and healing. And we remember how his touch was healing. We too need to be healed in body, mind and spirit. So come to the table of the Great Healer of us all, who gives us the gifts of the bread of life, the cup of blessing and the way of abundant life.

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:

They'll Know We Are Christians

***We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored:***

***Refrain: And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.***

***We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land: Refrain***

***We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride: Refrain***

***All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,
And all praise to Christ Jesus, God's only Son,
And all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one: Refrain***

Congregation joins on refrain

Congregation joins on refrain

Verses: (Invocation) Cantor:

All:

I say "Yes," my Lord. I say "Yes," my Lord.

6 Refrain:

I say "Yes," my Lord, in all the good - times, - through all the bad times

10

I say "Yes," my Lord, to ev - 'ry word - you - speak. ____

Blue #296

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.

Sending

***HYMN**

Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart

Blue #113

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Traci Hagberg
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Karen Lloyd,
Paul Shepherd, Cindy Gandrud,
Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Mara Shepherd
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Vicki Sippel
Coffee

Fellowship: Deb Hoffman
Counters: Marie Roe, Dennis Linder
*Altar table flowers are given by David Reilly
in memory of Ruth Reilly and by Rich and
Shari Clymer in celebration of their 53rd
wedding anniversary and vow renewal.*

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>June 15, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 10,682	\$ 272,269
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 254,952

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'

Over 9,500 diapers were given to local families through Our Neighbors' Place, Turning Point and the River Falls Food Pantry. Thank you for your generosity!



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), Judy Schierts (sister of JoAnn Lentz), Glen Corliss (brother of Raelle Jorae), Nigel (brother-in-law of Marshall Skule), Heather Williams, Tom Hall (brother of Rollie Hall), Kevin Rash (son-in-law of Pat Anderson)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those who will receive the 9562 diapers given as part of our Mother's to Father's Day diaper drive, may God bless both those who receive them and those who give them
- For those gearing up for our River Falls Days Bluegrass Concert on the church front lawn on Thursday, July 10th from 6-8pm, may we all rest, relax and enjoy music together
- For Troy Zakrzewski who joins our church building team along with Farnum Fuller and Tim Bylander, God bless you for keeping our building so clean!
- For those cooking and serving the meal at the Simpson Homeless Shelter in Minneapolis on Wednesday, July 16th, may all be blessed by these efforts
- For those who gave blood at our recent drive in the Fellowship Hall and who will give blood at the next one on July 23, God bless you for giving this precious gift
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she awaits a B+ kidney donor

Prayers for our World:

- For Father Jerry who retires from active ministry on June 30th after MANY years of ministry, may he be given the gift of rest
- For vulnerable people across the country and around the world affected by cuts in government programs
- For the ways the Spirit of God is at work in our world today moving us to be people of grace, compassion and joy
- For all those whose small daily acts of courage slowly help change the world (and themselves)
- 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 Rich and Shari Clymer celebrating their 53rd wedding anniversary on June 22, may your love continue to grow
- For the gift of summer and all that accompanies this special time of year
- For Katie Krueger and Hunter Pesik who were married on June 14th, may you continue to grow in love
- For Dick and Diane Jensen who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on June 12 with flowers for us, congratulations!
- For Bennett Roger Kearns born on May 8 to Sarah and Treavor Kearns, and grandparents of Roger and Norma Veith, may he grow in wisdom and faith
- For Marjorie Faulks who celebrated her 102nd birthday on Saturday, June 14th, you are an inspiration!

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Marc Otto whose Memorial Service will be here at church on Thursday, June 26th at 2pm with visitation an hour before and a reception to follow, may his wife Lori and his 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 at 1pm to remember his life
- Those who mourn, especially the families of Glenn Kees, Jan Hansen, Leah Gavin, Peg Steinmetz, Brian Healy, 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.

Loving Neighbor

Library Future: You may be wondering about the changes coming to our library. You can learn directly from library and community leaders, including Tom Westerhaus, Co-Chair, and Rebecca Ferguson, Board President. They will share visual and verbal information and answer your questions about how our award-winning, 28-year-old library is gearing up to serve the entire community for the next 30+ years. Join us with your own library stories, invite a neighbor, and share some refreshments (of course!) on **Monday, June 23, at 6:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall.**

Simpson Picnic Meal: Each year our church serves a picnic style meal at the Simpson Shelter in Minneapolis. This year the date is **Wed, July 16.** We cook the meal in our church kitchen then serve it in Minneapolis. Please use the sign-up sheet to help with this needed mission opportunity. Church interns receive intern credit for this mission.

VBS Cookie Bakers Needed: Homemade cookies are a special part of the VBS snack, so we need volunteers to make some. Each volunteer is asked to bring four dozen cookies. A sign-up list is available on the table.

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.

VBS Painting Work Night: Please come to help paint the VBS backdrops on **Tuesday, July 15, starting at 6:00.** The only talent necessary is the ability to paint within the lines. Please help!

VBS Volunteer Meeting: The VBS volunteer meeting will be **Thursday, July 24, 6:30–7:30 pm.** This is the most important chance to prepare for the week. Please plan to attend.

Save The Date! Feed My Starving Children is coming to River Falls! Thanks to a wonderful partnership of churches, individuals and businesses, including First Congregational Church, please mark your calendars for **Tuesday and Wednesday, September 9 and 10,** when our community will pack 100,000 meals at Tattersall. Sign-ups will begin the end of July. Thank you to our Endowment Grant Team who granted \$4,000 to help pay for the \$30,000 cost of packing these meals. Exciting!

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

Therapeutic Music Concert: Experience the calming, soothing effect of live therapeutic music! You are invited to a free concert by Certified Therapeutic Musician Kristin Andes and her harp on **Mon, July 21, 6:30-7:30 pm**.

Summer Choir is low stress and low commitment. We simply meet an hour before the service and sing a familiar song. The next dates will be **July 27 and August 10**. Please consider joining us!

Peaches: It's time to place your order for the delicious Washington State Peaches! 1 single-layer box is \$26.00; 2 or more single-layer boxes are \$25.00 each. **Orders must be placed by July 28 for pick up the first week of August.** There are 3 ways to order: 1. Email: office@firstchurchrf.org; 2. Sign up at church or online; 3. Call: 715-425-2052 – Mon-Thurs from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm or leave a message with name, phone, and number of boxes. This is an annual fundraiser for our youth. Thank you for your support!

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 **July 1 & 15**.

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 **June 24 & July 8**.

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 113 East Elm Street (Mei Mei's) & 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: Our next softball games are June 23 at 6:00 pm vs Abundant Life at Hoffman Park field #1; June 30 at 7:15 pm vs St. Bridget at Hoffman Park field #2. Come join in the fun whether playing or cheering the team on. If you have questions contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman234b@gmail.com.

Youth Events

Summer High School/College Bible Study: For June, our last meeting date is Wed, June 25 @ Waystone, 8:00 am. Friends are welcome and the church will cover drinks \$5 or under! Please let Alex know you are coming at 612-224-5894 so he has enough materials.

Youth Day Trip to the Cities: Alex is working on dates for the Day Trip to the Cities! The days and times will determine where we might visit. Please fill out this short questionnaire on the website to help Alex plan around the group's availability.

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

VBS: *Be The Light*: July 28-31, 2025

Children's Musical: *Malice in the Palace*: 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 is for children in kindergarten through completed grade 6. Emma Cruciani will be the director.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Galatians 3:23-29

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 8:26-39

Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me' — for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) Jesus then asked him, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Legion'; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.