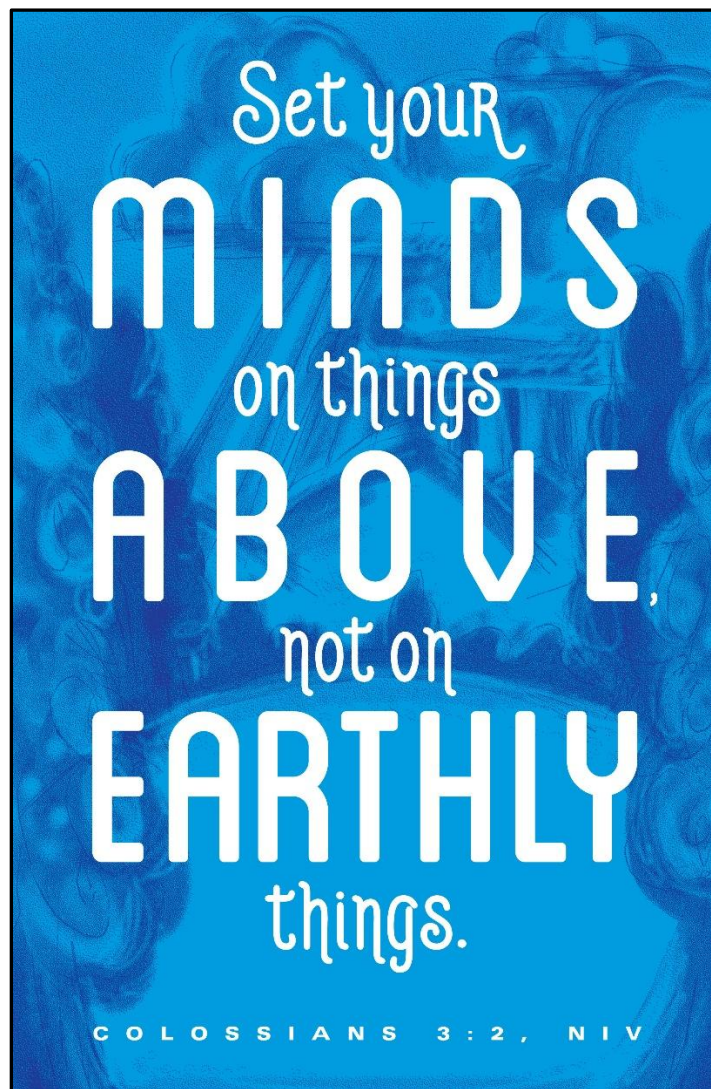


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

August 3, 2025



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

August 3, 2025

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

“It is better to live rich than to die rich.” — Samuel Johnson

“I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it’s not the answer.” — Jim Carrey

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: Give thanks to the Lord for God is good.

P: **God’s steadfast love endures forever.**

L: When we call upon the Lord, God comes to us to save us.

P: **God’s amazing love endures forever.**

L: When our hearts are troubled, God comes to us with blessings.

P: **God’s extravagant love endures forever.**

L: When our spirits struggle and are discouraged, God comes to us with healing.

P: **God’s generous love endures forever.**

L: When our lives are overwhelmed, God comes as a courageous Spirit.

P: **God’s forgiving love endures forever.**

All: **Come let us give thanks to the God who leads us into abundant life!**

***HYMN**

All Creatures of Our God and King

Blue #23

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Loving God, it is so easy to want our share, to get all we can. Sometimes in the getting and wanting, we lose sight of you, O God. We think we need so much. In all this accumulation, we just have more things. Today, all around my neighborhood, families go hungry. More and more children go to bed hungry each night. Help me, Lord. Help me to see beyond me and my wants. Help me to look to the needs of others. In the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: God is always with and for us.

P: God is always there to forgive, comfort, heal and restore us.

All: Together let us believe the good news of the Gospel: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free for service in his name. 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**

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 forevermore.

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 forevermore.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Colossians 3:1-11

PSALM 107:1-9, 43 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His love never fails.*

O, give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His love, His love it never fails.

L: O give thanks to the LORD, for God is good, God's steadfast love endures forever.

P: Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those God redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

L: Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

P: Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and God delivered them from their distress;

- L: God led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town.
- P: **Let them thank the LORD for God's steadfast love, for God's wonderful works to humankind.**
- L: For God satisfies the thirsty, and fills the hungry with good things.
- P: **Let those who are wise pay attention to these things and consider the steadfast love of the LORD. R**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 12 :13-21

SERMON

Where Are Your Riches

Rev. Doris Ruben

***HYMN**

Be Thou My Vision

Blue #502

***STATEMENT OF FAITH - Indonesia**

I believe in God, who is love and who has given the earth to all people.

I believe in Jesus Christ, who came to heal us, and to free us from all forms of oppression.

I believe in the Spirit of God, who works in and through all who are turned toward the truth.

I believe in the community of faith, which is called to be at the service of all people.

I believe in God's promise to finally destroy the power of sin in us all, and to establish the kingdom of justice and peace for all humankind.

I do not believe that suffering need be in vain, that death is the end, that the disfigurement of our world is what God intended.

But I dare to believe, always and in spite of everything, in God's power to transform and transfigure, fulfilling the promise of a new heaven and a new earth where justice and peace will flourish. 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

Hineh Mah Tov

Kristen Andes

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is for people to dwell together in unity." - Psalm 133:1

Arr. by Kathleen Blackwell-Plank

***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**

Generous God, **this world and all that is in it are yours. You have guided us in the paths of plenty and taught us to be grateful. Thank you for the opportunity to let go of some of this abundance. Thank you for the chance to take a leap of faith, trusting that there will always be enough to share your bounty with others. 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: 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:

Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

Blue #326

Let Us Break Bread Together

Blue #699

In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful



In the Lord I'll be ev - er thank - ful, in the Lord I will re - joice! Look to God, do not be a -
fine
fraid; lift up your voic - es, the Lord is near; lift up your voic - es, the Lord is near. In the

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**

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Blue #72

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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Our guest preacher this morning is the Rev. Doris Ruben a retired UCC pastor who lives in Winona and serves with Pastor Chris on the Northwest Church and Ministry Team. She has served pastorates in Stratford, Dorchester, Wisconsin Rapids as well as churches in Iowa and Minnesota. She is also a close friend of the Rev. Barb de Souza our retired healthcare missionary in Brazil. Please be sure to welcome her.

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Rev. Doris Ruben
Celebrant: Rev. Doris Ruben
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Carole Mottaz
Deacons: Laura Anderson, Paul Shepherd,
Jean Most, Karen Lloyd
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Nursery: Jenny and Hannah Luedtke
Trustee: Scott Nelson
Coffee
Fellowship: Diane Olson
Counters: Jean Smith, Dennis Linder

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>July 27, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,073	\$ 309,274
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 318,690

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'

Malice in the Palace
CHILDREN'S MUSICAL
First Congregational United Church of Christ
110 N 3RD ST. RIVER FALLS, WI
715-425-2052
Rehearsals: August 18-21, 2025, 9:00 am-Noon
Show: Thursday, August 21st, 6:30 pm
Age: Completed Kindergarten-Completed Grade 6
All are welcome! NO CHARGE!
To register, visit www.firstchurchrf.org

Dinner and A Show

Come for dinner and a show
on **Thursday, August 21.**

Dinner at 6:00 pm.

Show at 6:30 pm.

It's a cheap date night plus
you can support our kids.

Sign up!

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Barbara de Souza, Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Judy Schierts (sister of JoAnn Lentz), Glen Corliss (brother of Raelle Jorae), Tom Hall (brother of Rollie Hall), Julie (mother of Kit Luedtke), Amy (friend of Barb and Larry Peterson), Anna (granddaughter of Barb Stephens)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those who enjoyed and participated in our 2025 VBS week—Be The Light, may the light and love of Christ shine through all of us
- For the Tools for School Drive as we seek to provide school supplies to local kids, may generosity flow
- For those awaiting our peaches and those who will distribute them, bless you all
- For those gearing up for the Youth Musical *Malice in the Palace* which tells the story of Esther on August 18-21, may it be a time of faith filled fun for all
- For those participating in the Tuesday/Wednesday morning Summer Youth Bible Study with Alex, may it be a time of connection
- For those who gave blood at our recent drive in the Fellowship Hall, God bless you for giving this precious gift
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

Prayers for our World:

- For power workers who have been working overtime with recent storms, we appreciate their unseen work
- For people in Gaza, may they be fed
- For those cleaning up after storms and floods, may we be good neighbors
- For vulnerable people across the country and around the world affected by cuts in government programs
- For the hope of peace in Iran, Gaza, Palestine, Israel and Ukraine, may God's Spirit be present and may the innocent be protected
- 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 AWESOME VBS teachers and volunteers, God bless you all!
- For Tools for School, a local ministry that helps local families with school supplies, what a gift to our community
- For our Trustees who recently repainted the Fireplace Room, bless you!
- For the joy of peaches and supporting our Youth Fund!
- For those who served the funeral receptions for the White and Faulks families, you are a blessing
- For the gift of summer and all that accompanies this special time of year

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For those who mourn, especially the families of Marjorie Faulks, Chuck White, Marc Otto, Glenn Kees, Jan Hansen, 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.

Vacation Bible School

Thanks to all who made our VBS week great. Let Your Light Shine was our theme and our call going forward. Here are some pictures of our week.



Sunday, August 3, 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 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.

Sunday School Teachers Needed: Sunday School begins again on Rally Day, September 7. Please volunteer to teach. All classes have teaching partners so no one teaches every week. This is an important ministry and we need volunteers. Please sign up at church or online. There will be a meeting for Sunday School teachers on Thursday, September 4, 6:30–7:30 pm.

Loving Neighbor

Tools for School: Once again, we are collecting school supplies for local families. As you are out shopping, please start collecting everything students might need this fall (crayons, pens, pencils, notebooks, backpacks, etc.). The School Supply Event will be on **August 18 and 19** here at church. Typically, we serve about 300 students. Thank you for your generous support of this needed local ministry. Please bring donations to the church and place them in the containers in the gathering area. Please also sign up to help sort and distribute items.

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

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

Night of Dinner/Theater: You are invited to a night of dinner and a show on **Thursday, August 21**. Dinner will be served starting at **6:00 pm**, followed by the main feature: the musical *Malice in the Palace: The Story of Esther*. The show has wonderful music and clever lines. Please come to support the young people in the congregation. You may sign the reservation list at church or online.

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, August 20 at 1:00 pm at Culvers**. 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 **Aug 12 & 26**.

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 **Aug 12 & 26**.

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: It was a hot night to play softball, but at least it wasn't raining. We played the undefeated Servant of the Shepherd and won. Yay, especially since we are at the point where we have only one maybe two extra players to switch in and out every other inning. Our present record is 5 wins, 2 losses and one rain out. Looking ahead our next 3 games are:

August 4 at 6:00 pm vs First Covenant at Hoffman Park, Field #1

August 11 at 7:15 pm vs River at Hoffman Park Field # 1

August 18 at 6:00 pm at Hoffman Park Field #2

Come join in the fun whether you are playing or cheering the team on. If you have questions, please contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman234b@gmail.com.

Youth Events

Day Trip to the Cities for Middle and High School Youth: Join Alex in the church van on **Wed, August 6** for a day in the cities. We will explore parks, new food, visit some mission of the church and have a great day together. Contact Alex to sign up.

High School and College Bible Study: Join Alex and others for the summer weekly Bible Study. We meet at local coffee shops on either Tuesday or Wednesdays. Text Alex to get on the list.

Children's Musical: The musical is for children in kindergarten through completed grade 6. Emma Cruciani will be the director. Please spread the word and invite children to participate. All are welcome and there is no cost.

Children's Musical: *Malice in the Palace*: August 18-21, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Colossians 3 :1-11

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.’ But he said to him, ‘Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?’ And he said to them, ‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.’ Then he told them a parable: ‘The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, “What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?” Then he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.’