

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

August 24, 2025



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

August 24, 2025

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.

- Henri Nouwen

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

Pavan: The Earl of Salisbury

William Byrd/arr. Stefano

Cedar Valley Brass Quintet

Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho

arr. Verse Ormsby Jr

Ashokan Farewell

Jay Ungar/arr. Jameson

Soon May the Wellerman Come

arr. Seb Skelly

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: When we feel we are the wrong age or gender or social status,

P: **God calls us.**

L: When we feel we are too weary or weak or fearful,

P: **God calls us.**

L: When we feel we are too busy or untrained or not qualified,

P: **God calls us.**

All: **Let us open ourselves to the word of God and the fullness of the Spirit. Let us worship the God who leads us into life.**

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: When we fail to be agents of Christ's love,

P: Heal us Holy God, and set us on your path.

L: When we are angry and take out our problems on others,

P: Heal us Holy God, and set us on your path.

L: When we say hurtful things, or lose our patience,

P: Heal us Holy God, and set us on your path.

L: When we find it easy to see the sins of others, but forget to look to ourselves,

P: Heal us Holy God, and set us on your path. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Our God does not desire that we wallow in the sins of the past.

P: In Christ, God frees us from the sins of the past and opens to each of us a bright new future.

L: In Christ we are forgiven.

All: 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

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.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Hebrews 12:18-29

PSALM 71:1-6 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



O Lord, you are my hope, my trust, Lord, from my youth.

L: In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.

P: In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me.

- L:** Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.
- P:** Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.
- L:** For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
- P:** From my birth I have leaned upon you, my protector since my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you. *R*

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 13:10-17

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Rejoice, the Lord Is King!

Blue #342

***STATEMENT OF FAITH** (taken from the New Zealand Church)

You, O God, are supreme and holy. You create our world and give us life.
Your purpose overarches everything we do. You have always been with us.
You are God.

You, O God, are infinitely generous, good beyond all measure.
You came to us before we came to you.

You have revealed and proved your love for us in Jesus Christ, who lived and died
and rose again. You are with us now.

You are God.

You, O God, are Holy Spirit. You empower us to be your gospel in the world.
You reconcile and hear; you overcome death. You are our God. We worship you.
Amen.

THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

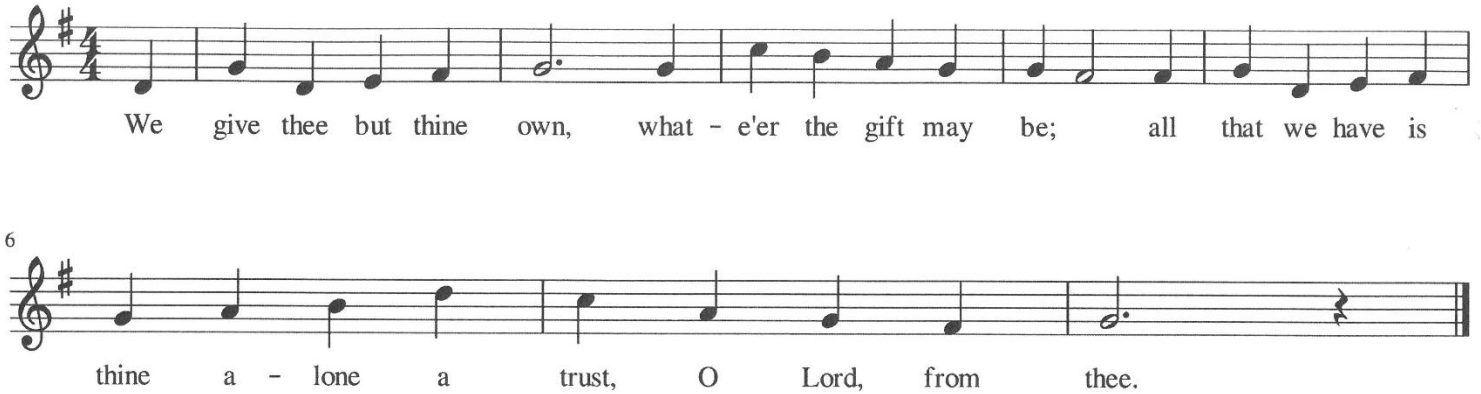
...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

Shall We Gather at the River
Robert Lowry/arr. Todd Marchand

Cedar Valley Brass Quintet

OFFERTORY



*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Generous God, **thank you for the gifts you bestow upon us daily. Make us aware of each blessing that comes our way - and create in us the constant desire to be blessings for others. Bless what we bring before you, we pray. Amen**

Celebrating the Meal

(All Christians are welcome at the table of our Lord. The bread is gluten free and red wine and white grape juice are offered. Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.)

The Invitation to the Meal

- L: Jesus said I am the bread of life. You who come to me shall not hunger; you who believe in me shall never thirst.
- P: **In the company of all who are hungry and thirsty, we come to this table to know the risen Christ and to share in the life giving bread of life and cup of blessing.**

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 proclaim 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:

The Moorlough Shore

Irish Folk Song

Evening Song

R. Kevin Paul

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**

When the Saints Go Marching In

Cedar Valley Brass

***O when the saints go marching in, O when the saints go marching in,
O Lord, I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.***

***O when the sun refused to shine, O when the sun refused to shine,
O Lord, I want to be in that number when the sun refused to shine.***

***O when they crown Him Lord of all, O when they crown Him Lord of all,
O Lord, I want to be in that number when they crown Him Lord of all.***

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

When the Saints Go Marching In (reprise)

Cedar Valley Brass

arr. Zack Smith

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Cedar Valley Brass Quintet:

Jim Perkins - Trumpet

Mike Fuller - Trumpet

Jane Mahoney - French Horn

Marsha Pearson - Trombone

Mark Perry - Tuba

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Steve Koecher
Deacons: Brian Miller, Loral Keil,
Ann Nelson, Paul Shepherd,
Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Marg Downing
Trustee: Vicki Sippel
Coffee Fellowship:
Counters: Jane Truesdill, Dennis Linder
*Altar table flowers are given by Eunice Filkins
in thanks for family and for grandkids going
off to school.*

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
Custodians: Farnum Fuller,
Troy Zakrzewski

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Aug 10, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 9,543	\$ 319,236
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 339,936

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, 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), Tom Mercer (son in law of JoAnn Lentz), Jodi Chumas (friend of Ann Nelson)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our Tools for School Drive as we seek to provide school supplies to local kids, may generosity flow
- For those who bought, unloaded, sorted, sold and enjoyed our peaches!
- For those gearing up for the Youth Musical Malice in the Palace which tells the story of Esther on August 18-21, with a dinner and performance on Thursday, August 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 those called to be Sunday School teachers and Wednesday School helpers—is God calling you to help this year?
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

Prayers for our World:

- For those cleaning up after storms, especially around where over a dozen UCC churches report damage and where over a thousand Church World Service clean up buckets have been donated, may we support one another
- For teachers, families and students getting ready for the back to school season
- For those going into the military, may they be given strength, courage and our gratitude
- For people in Gaza, may they be fed and peace finally emerge
- 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 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 the gift of peaches and the youth ministries they will enable
- 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 our church building team of Tim, Farnum and Troy who have been working overtime fixing the bell tower, moving tables and keeping everything clean, we appreciate you!
- For those who served the funeral receptions for the White and Faulks families, you are a blessing
- For these last few weeks of summer, may we squeeze in all the joy we can

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.

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.

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.

Wednesday School Workers Needed: Wednesday School begins on **October 1**. We also need volunteers to provide snacks on a rotating basis. Please sign up at church or online.

Rally Day: Rally Day, when Sunday School, Sunday Morning Bible Study, choir and bells resume, is **Sept 7**. All children who are three (or nearly three) years old (and toilet trained) are welcome in Sunday School.

Sunday Morning Bible Study: Sunday morning Bible study groups resumes on **September 7**. The group discuss the Bible passages used in worship. The groups meets at **9:00–9:50 Sunday mornings** in the Youth Room. Please join us! For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study: The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study resumes on September 10. The group will study the Gospel of John. This will be an in-depth yet accessible study of John. Copies of the discussion book are available for \$20.00 in the church office. Prior to the first meeting, please read the book's introduction. You could also read the whole of John's gospel from beginning to end over the summer. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

Red Cross Blood Drive: The Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church is scheduled for **Tues, Sept 30, 11:00 am–5:00 pm**. Call 1-800-733-2767 or go to 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 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

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 and lively conversation. Our next gatherings are **Aug 26 & Sept 9**.

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 26 & Sept 9**.

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 St (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

Journey House Summer Send-Off - Aug 22, 6:00-8:45 pm: All young adults (18-40ish) are invited to join Journey House (143 E. Cascade Ave) for a campfire and outdoor game night - an evening of fun, fellowship, and connection with fellow young adults from River Falls and neighboring communities! S'mores, food, and snacks will be provided. You will also have an opportunity to learn more about Journey House and the exciting new Young Adult Ministry they are starting.

Youth Events

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.

Fall Confirmation Orientation: Required Meetings: The 2025 Confirmation Orientation Meeting for Middle School students will be after worship on **Rally Day, September 7**. This meeting is **required** for all confirmands in grades 6–8 and their parents. The 2025 Confirmation and Church Intern Orientation Meeting for High School students will be after worship on **Sunday, September 14**. This meeting is **required** for 9th graders and High School students who will participate in the Church Intern program and their parents.

Wednesday School: All children who will be in kindergarten through Grade 5 in the fall, are invited to participate in Wednesday School. Elementary students in River Falls are picked up at the four elementary schools in town at the end of the school day. Wednesday School concludes at 5:15. Registration and permission forms are at church and on the website. It is important to have advance registration in order to be adequately prepared for students, particularly due to transportation needs. Wednesday School begins **October 1**. Please contact Pastor Stacy with questions.

NOTES

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Hebrews 12:18-29

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death.” Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.”) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking, for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.” This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of what is shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe, for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 13:10-17

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured and not on the Sabbath day.” But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it to water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?” When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame, and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things being done by him.