

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

**September 14, 2025**



**September 7    Priorities: Putting First Things First**

**September 14    Stillness: Finding Peace Amidst Busyness**

**September 21    Love and Truth: Avoiding the Extremes of Life and Faith**

**September 28    Growth: Growing Without Burnout**

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

September 14, 2025

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 am

<b>Gathering</b>
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*There are books to be read; landscapes to be walked; friends to be with; life to be lived....This new epidemic of distractions is our civilization's specific weakness. And its threat is not so much to our minds, even as they shape-shift under the pressure. The threat is to our very souls. At this rate, if the noise does not relent, we might even forget we have a soul.*

*- Andrew Sullivan*

*Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life. We do not take the spiritual life seriously if we do not set aside some time to be with God and listen to God. - Henri Nouwen*

<p>Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Activity bags are available for children.</li><li>- Large print bulletins are available.</li><li>- Visitors please stop at the welcome booth.</li><li>- Please stand when noted by the *</li><li>- Congregation responses are in bold.</li><li>- Please note our worship service is livestreamed.</li></ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Our Mission is to Love God and Serve People.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Everyone is welcome because everyone matters.</b></p>
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**GATHERING MUSIC**

**WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**L:** We have gathered from many different places for worship.

**P:** **How good it is to worship together!**

**L:** We come from different occupations and diverse activities.

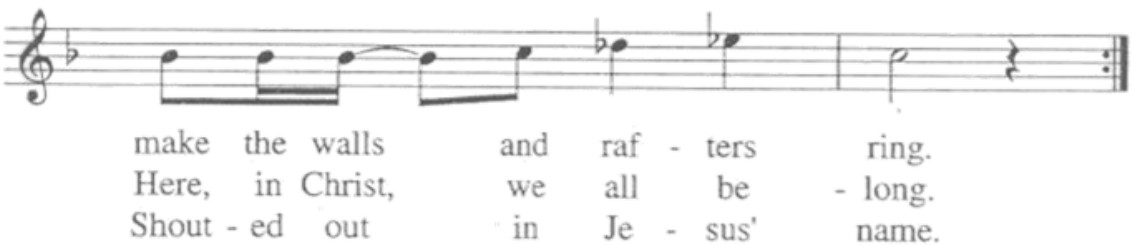
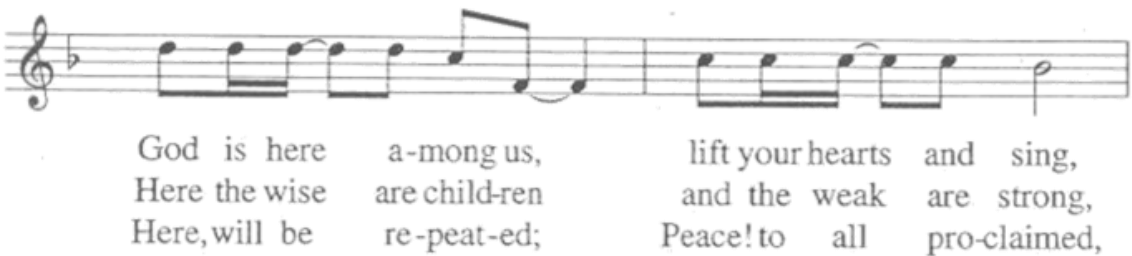
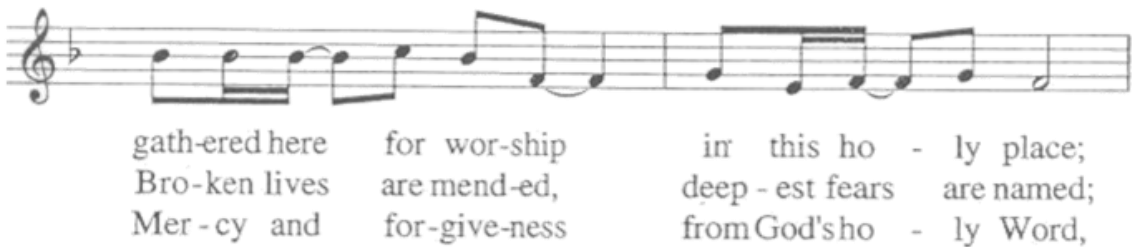
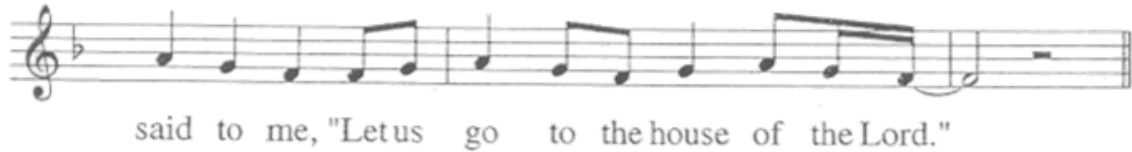
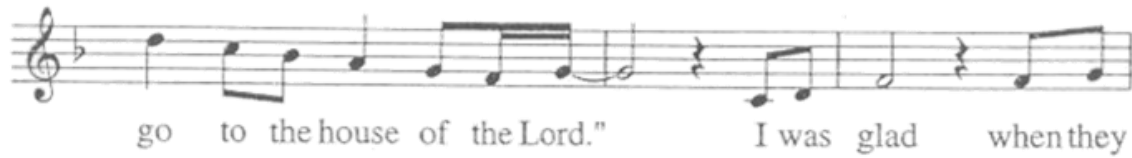
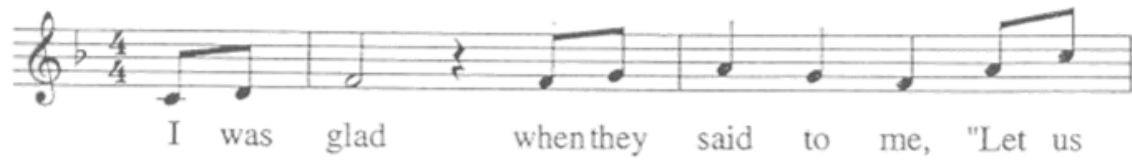
**P:** **How good it is to worship together!**

**L:** We come as unique individuals, yet bound together in the love of Christ.

**P:** **How good it is to worship together!**

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

*I Was Glad*



### **\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

- L: O God, you asked for my hands, that you might use them for your purpose.  
P: **I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them, for the work was hard.**  
L: You asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice.  
P: **I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.**  
L: You asked for my eyes to see the pain of poverty.  
P: **I closed them, for I did not want to see.**  
L: You asked for my life, that you might work through me.  
P: **I gave a small part, that I might not get too involved.**  
L: Lord, forgive my small efforts to serve you...  
P: **Only when it is convenient for me to do so, only in those places where it is safe to do so, and only with those who make it easy to do so.**  
All: **O God, forgive me, renew me, send me out as your instrument, that I may be your disciple. Amen.**

### **\*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

- L: God the Creator brings you new life, forgives and redeems you.  
P: **Take hold of this forgiveness, and live your life in the Spirit of Jesus.**  
L: Take comfort in the assurance that even those things that are hidden from memory, or are too deep for our words, are not beyond God's forgiving love.  
P: **God, who knows us completely bestows pardon and peace.**  
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**

*We are singing, for the Lord is our light, we are singing for the Lord is our light.  
We are singing, for the Lord is our light, we are singing for the Lord is our light.*

*We are singing, oh, we are singing for the Lord is our light.  
We are singing, oh, we are singing for the Lord is our light.*

Hearing the Word
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**PSALM 130 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)**

**R**



- L: Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!
- P: **If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?**
- L: But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.
- P: **I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.**
- L: O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with God is great power to redeem.
- P: **It is God who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. R**

**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: Sisters and Brothers in Christ, this is the table where our Savior Jesus Christ wants to feed us on the bread of life. Let us feast on his grace that forgives us. Let us feast on his peace that calms us. Let us feast on his love that frees us. Come just as you are and be fed by him.

***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:*

**Be Not Afraid**

**Blue #430**

*Congregation join on refrain*

*Refrain*

Be not a - fraid. I go be - fore you al - ways. Come, fol - low

me, and I will give you rest.

**Healer of Our Every Ill**

**Blue #630**

**Come and Fill Our Hearts**

***Come and fill our hearts with your peace.***

***You alone, O Lord, are holy.***

***Come and fill our hearts with your peace, alleluia!***

***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.)

*This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.*

**GOSPEL LESSON**

**Luke 15:1-10**

**SERMON**

**Rev. Chris Myers**

**\*HYMN**

*Come Away from Rush and Hurry*

**Blue #655**

**\*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** (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**

*All Things New*  
*by Elaine Hagenberg*

**Chancel Choir**

**\*OFFERTORY** (Sung twice)

I II

Pre - pare the way of the Lord. Pre - pare the way of the Lord,

III IV

and all peo-ple will see the sal - va - tion of our God. Pre -

\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Giving God, we give our gifts in love and thanksgiving for all that we have been given. Help us give with hearts and minds open to the possibilities of what we can do to heal the brokenness of our world. Let our love travel where we do not, making pathways of peace where there are none, through 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: Marie Roe  
Deacons: Loral Keil, Brian Miller,  
Ann Nelson, Kathy Tomlinson  
Organist: Marsha Pearson  
Nursery: Kahla Fuller  
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman  
Trustee: Tim Bylander  
Coffee  
Fellowship: Beatty Family  
Counters: Jean Smith, Vicki Sippel  
Altar table flowers are given by JoAnn Mathews in memory of Harvey Mathews.

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

	Sept 7, 2025	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,355	\$ 361,887
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 382,428

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), Chuck Kamorowski, Dan Rude, Glenn Hansen, Kathy Wochomurka

**Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:**

- For our new church council and committee members who begin their work this week, may they help us to be more Christ-like in our service to the community
- For the return of the choir and bell choir, God bless you and your musical gifts!
- For the 50 people from our church and the hundreds of community folks who packed 100,000 meals at Feed My Starving Children this week at Tattersall in River Falls, may all be blessed
- For the return of the fall schedules, may we breathe and find our groove
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

**Prayers for our World:**

- For an end to the virus of political violence in this country
- For the two children and many injured in the latest school shooting, this time in Minneapolis, may they be comforted and may this madness end
- For those going into the military, especially Ryan Luedtke who left recently for boot camp, may he be given strength and courage in these new few weeks
- 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 our Sunday School teachers - thank you for being a blessing to our young people!
- For our church song leaders/cantors Dave Reilly and Jamie Mills, thank you for sharing your gifts with us
- For those serving this coming program year on our committees and church council who begin work on Tuesday, September 16th at 6:30pm on All Committee Night, may your leadership help us to be a more loving, more courageous and more welcoming congregation
- For the return of Sunday morning and Wednesday afternoon Bible Study and Pastor Stacy who leads this, may we grow in faith and love
- For Barb and Larry Peterson who celebrated their 58th wedding anniversary on September 2, may your love continue to grow

**For those grieving the loss of loved ones:**

- For the family of Hing Man, brother of Kam Ross, who died recently and for Kam who heads to Hong Kong for his funeral, may his family be comforted
- For the family of Kent Tomlinson, brother of Kathy Tomlinson, who died recently, may his family be comforted
- For those who mourn, especially the families of Marjorie Faulks, Chuck White, Marc Otto, 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**

### ***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!

**Sunday Morning Bible Study:** Please join us on Sunday mornings to discuss the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets from **9:00–9:50** in the Youth Room. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

**Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study:** The group is studying 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. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

### ***Loving Neighbor***

**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.

**Empty Pill Bottles (Prescription Only):** The River Falls Lions Club is collecting empty pill bottles, only the clear prescription bottles that are filled by our pharmacists, to send to Africa where there is an urgent need. The bottles will be washed, and the labels soaked off before they are shipped. A tub is in the gathering area. If you have questions, contact Carole Mottaz.

**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](http://amongfriendsrf.com) & Facebook. It is held at church **Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am to 3pm**.

### ***Loving Self***

**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.

**Knitting Group Update:** Please bring any hats, scarves or mittens to the green bin in the gathering area by **Thurs, Sept 18**. We will organize the items and arrange for them to be picked up by the Basics for Local Kids.

**Learning Community: Cardboard Chronicles:** Please join us for the next Learning Community event on **Tuesday, October 7, at 6:30 pm**. The focus will be a conversation about the art exhibit *Cardboard Chronicles: The Art of Rudolph Bostic* that will be displayed in the Fellowship Hall starting October 1. This is the second (and final) art exhibit made possible through the grant First Congregational received from the Lilly Foundation.

**Merry Widows:** They will meet on **Wed, Sept 17 at 1:00 pm at Applebees in Hudson**. 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 and lively conversation. Our next gatherings are **Sept 23 & Oct 7**.

**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 **Sept 23 & Oct 14**.

**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](mailto:fristroe@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***

**Partnering for Our Sustainable Future: A Community Conversation Hosted by Hope for Earth - Thurs, Sept 18, 6:30-8:30 pm at River Falls High School:** Hope for Earth is launching the Climate Action and Resiliency Initiative, and they want your voice at the table! They will explore practical ways to improve everyday life, like making energy more affordable, reducing waste, strengthening local food systems, and creating inviting green spaces. No experience needed, just your ideas and energy. Light refreshments provided. Free and open to all. RSVP at <https://www.hopeforearth.org/>

**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](http://www.redcrossblood.org) and enter: [firstcongregationalrf](#) to schedule an appointment.

### ***Youth Events***

**Confirmation Orientation: Required Meeting:** The Confirmation and Church Intern Orientation Meeting for High School students will be **TODAY after worship**. 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 in kindergarten through Grade 5 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 & permission forms are available. 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.

**Spring Break 2026:** Spread the word! Save the date! We have 20 spots for a Spring Break Mission Trip to UCC-related Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi for **Spring Break of 2026: March 14-21**. Any youth age 14 and older and any adult who wants to spend a week working on rehabbing houses in sunny Biloxi is welcome to join. Note Hudson Spring Break is the week before but UWRF and many UW Schools are off when we are — we would love to have college students participate!

There will be a meeting **TODAY after worship in the Youth Room** to talk about the trip and begin sign ups. We expect this trip to fill quickly so make sure you are at the meeting! Alex Plum can provide details.

**FIRST LESSON: Luke 5:12-16**

Once, when he was in one of the cities, there was a man covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him, 'Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.' Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, 'I do choose. Be made clean.' Immediately the leprosy left him. And he ordered him to tell no one. 'Go', he said, 'and show yourself to the priest, and, as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing, for a testimony to them.' But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. But Jesus would withdraw to deserted places and pray.

**GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 15 :1-10**

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

So he told them this parable: 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'



Thanks to all in our church  
and RF community who  
packed 100,000 meals for  
Feed My Starving Children  
this week!