

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

September 21, 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 21, 2025

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 am

Gathering

“Christianity is more than a theory about the universe, more than teachings written down on paper; it is a path along which we journey - in the deepest and richest sense, it is the way of life.”
- Kallistos Ware

<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.- Visitors please stop at the welcome booth.- Please stand when noted by the *- Congregation responses are in bold.- Please note our worship service is livestreamed.	<p>Our Mission is to Love God and Serve People.</p> <p>Everyone is welcome because everyone matters.</p>
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GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: In the name of Jesus, who washed feet and called us to serve in his name,

P: Let us love one another!

L: In the name of Jesus, who broke the bread and served the cup,

P: Let us love one another!

L: In the name of Jesus, who gave us a new commandment,

P: Let us love one another!

L: In the name of Jesus, who died, was buried, who rose and ascended,

P: Let us love one another!

L: Brothers and sisters, let us love one another, according to the way of Jesus.

P: For by this, everyone will know that we are his disciples, if we love one another.

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

***HYMN**

Lead Me, Guide Me

Blue #498

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of Compassion, **you sent Jesus as the Savior of the world, and told us to love one another as much as you love us. Yet, we struggle to do this. We have a hard time loving those who are not like us, who disagree with us, or who ask us to face the truth about ourselves. Forgive us, God, and show us how to love thy way you command us to love. Release us from our judgment and our fear. Open our hearts so that we live out your love in our lives. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Friends, the good news is this:

P: Love is from God, and we are loved by God.

L: God sent Christ into the world to show us a new way of living.

P: Let us learn to love from him and be at peace.

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.

BAPTISM OF BLAKE MARIE AND BRYNN CAROLYN BRUNS

Welcome and Presentation

L: They were bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant, and said to them.

P: “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

L: Members and friends in Christ, we gather to celebrate God’s gift of grace in the baptism of Blake Marie and Brynn Carolyn Bruns. To us a child is given!

P: Thanks be to God!

Address

- L: Baptism is the sacrament through which we are united to Jesus Christ and given a part in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. Baptism is the visible sign of an invisible event, the reconciliation of people to God. It shows the death of self and the rising to a life of obedience and praise. It shows also the pouring out of the Spirit on those whom God has chosen. In baptism, God works in us the power of forgiveness, the renewal of the Spirit, and the knowledge of the call to be a part of God's people.
- P: This is the water of baptism. Out of this water, we rise with new life, forgiven of sin and one in Christ, members of Christ's body.**

Questions

- L: As parents and sponsors of these children, will you encourage them to renounce the powers of evil and to receive the freedom of new life in Christ?

Parents and Sponsors: We will, with the help of God.

- L: Will you teach them that they may be led to profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by sharing with them the church's life, worship, and fellowship?

Parents and Sponsors: We will, with the help of God.

- L: Christ will first be known to Blake and Brynn by the Christ seen in your home. By the grace of God, will you model the Christian life for them, provide instruction in the Christian faith, and live with them in the covenant of baptism so that they may lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ?

Parents and Sponsors: We will, with the help of God.

- L: Will you, the children of First Congregational United Church of Christ, welcome Blake and Brynn into the life of the church? Will you learn, play, and explore God's world with them?

Children: We will, with the help of God.

- L: Jesus calls us to make disciples of all nations and to offer them the gift of grace in baptism. Will you who witness and celebrate this sacrament, nurture one another in the Christian faith and include Blake and Brynn in your love and prayer?

P: We promise our love and prayer.

Act of Baptism

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Let us pray. Gracious God, bless this water. By your Holy Spirit save those who confess the name of Jesus Christ that sin may have no power over them. Create new life in your servants Blake and Brynn who will be baptized this day, that they too may rise with Christ. Glory to you, Eternal God, the one who was, and is, and shall always be, world without end. Amen.

I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit be upon you, Blake and Brynn, child of God, disciple of Christ, member of the church.

Baptismal Song

Child of Blessing, Child of Promise

***Child of blessing, child of promise, baptized with the Spirit's sign;
with this water God has sealed you unto love and grace divine.***

***Child of God your loving Parent, learn to know whose child you are.
Grow to laugh and sing and worship, trust and love God more than all.***

Prayer

L: Let us pray. We give you thanks, O God, for these children and the grace acknowledged here in water and the Spirit. Embrace us all as sons and daughters in the one household of your love. Grant us grace to receive and nurture this new member of the body of Christ.

P: **Give to the newly baptized: strength for life's journey, courage in time of suffering, the joy of faith, the freedom of love, and the hope of new life; through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.**

Blake Marie Bruns

Born: November 21, 2022

Brynn Carolyn Bruns

Born: February 17, 2025

Baptized: September 21, 2025

Blake and Brynn's parents are Jack and Lacey Bruns

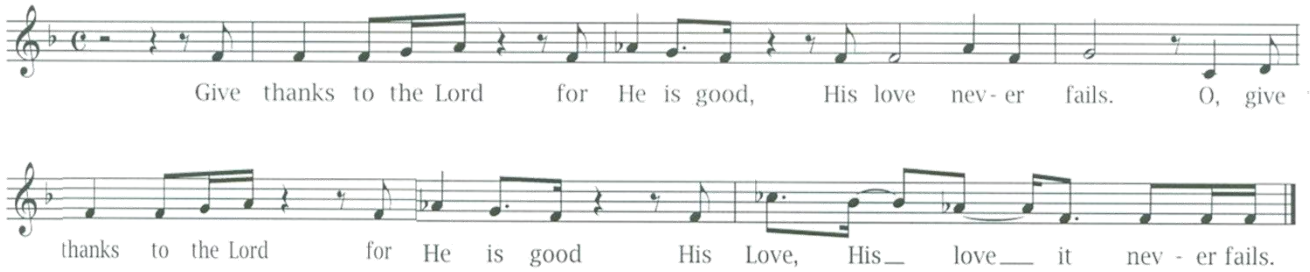
Blake's sponsors are Luke Killian and Olivia Heil

Brynn's sponsors are Payge and Dylan Kusilek

Hearing the Word

PSALM 118:1-9 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His love nev-er fails. O, give
thanks to the Lord for He is good His Love, His love it nev-er fails.

- L: Praise the Lord, who is so good, whose faithful love endures forever!
P: **Let the house of Israel proclaim, "God's faithful love endures forever!"**
L: Let the house of Aaron say, "God's faithful love endures forever!"
P: **Let all who revere the Holy One say, "God's faithful love endures forever!" R**
L: In deep distress I called upon you, O God; you answered by setting me free.
P: **You are beside me; what can mortal power do against me?**
L: With you at my side to help me, I shall have victory over my foes.
P: **It is better to trust in you than in mortals. It is better to trust you than put any trust in rulers. 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: Come you thankful people, come.
P: **Come and eat the bread of life!**
L: Come and drink the cup of blessing!
P: **Come and gather around Christ's table as friends and family.**
All: **Together let us thank the God of abundance and let us take our place as God's thankful people.**

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:

Gather Your People

Congregation join on refrain

Gath-er your peo-ple, O Lord. Gath-er your peo-ple, O

Lord. One bread, one bod-y, one spir-it of

love. Gath-er your peo-ple, O Lord.

You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

Blue #705

Bind Us Together

Congregation join on refrain:

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, bind us together in love.

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.)

Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.
Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.
Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory;
Children of the Lord.

***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

There is a Balm in Gilead
arr. Susan Geschke

Jubilee Ringers

***OFFERTORY**

Now Thank We All Our God

*Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom his world rejoices;
Who, from our mother's arms, has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Thank you, extravagant God, for your blessings in our lives. We offer ourselves
in grateful response, seeking to live with such compassion toward others that your
blessings will flow through us to bless our community and our world. May we be
your courageous disciples. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Blue #358

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Jean Smith
Deacons: Laura Anderson, Becky Pajac,
Kathy Tomlinson, Lance Lueck,
Paul Shepherd
Organist: Terry Mithun
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Steve Koecher
Coffee
Fellowship: Cindy Gandrud
Counters: Diane Welsh, Allen Barnes
*Altar table flowers are given by Cindy
Gandrud in memory of Liz Gandrud.*

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>Sept 14, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 11,296	\$ 385,495
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 393,051

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), Chuck Kamorowski, Dan Rude, Glenn Hansen, Kathy Wachomurka, Jack and Donna (brother and sister-in-law of Barb Stephens)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our new Church Council and Committee members who began their work this past week, may they help us to be more Christ-like in our service to the community
- For Brynn Carolyn and Blake Marie who will be baptized this Sunday, may they grow in faith and love and may their parents Lacey and Jack Bruns be given wisdom and strength
- For Roman Klink and Julianna Hanson to be married Oct 18, may they grow in love
- For the return of the bell choir this week, God bless you and your musical gifts!
- For our Among Friends program as they seek to find a new director, may God's Spirit be present
- For the 50 people from our church and the hundreds of community folks who packed 100,000 meals at Feed My Starving Children recently at Tattersall in River Falls, may all be blessed
- 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 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 amazing Wednesday School drivers, helpers and snack providers (we need more of each!), thank you for your generosity as we begin on Wednesday, October 1
- 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 began their work this week, 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 those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Mindy Ramberg, a teacher in Hammond who died suddenly after a bee sting, may her family and colleagues be comforted
- For the family of Mark Stafford, husband of Polly Smith Stafford who died suddenly, may their family be comforted
- For the family of Hing Man, brother of Kam Ross, who died recently and for his family who head to Hong Kong for his funeral, may his family be comforted
- For those who mourn, especially the families of Hing Man, Kent Tomlinson, 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.

BOWDEN
Collections PRESENTS



Cardboard Chronicles: **THE BIBLICAL ART OF RUDOLPH BOSTIC**

Cardboard Chronicles: The Biblical Art of Rudolph Bostic brings together twenty-three paintings from one of America's most amazing self-taught artists. His vibrant images, rendered in enamel and house paint with a shimmering glossy finish on cardboard and his flamboyant use of color put him in a category all his own.

Rudolph, who lives in Savannah, Georgia, says that his inspirations come from many sources, "especially the Bible and reproductions of the works of the masters such as Rembrandt, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo." Bostic's work was featured in the 2005 inaugural exhibition of the Hurn Museum of Contemporary Folk Art in Savannah, GA, and his art is in the permanent collection of the High Museum in Atlanta, GA. Some of the most prestigious southern galleries of folk art represent Rudolph Bostic.

Cardboard Chronicles begins with *The Creation of Adam*, *Adam and Eve Naming the Animals* and *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, then turns to the colorful story of Noah. Many of his paintings portray the life of Christ. *Comforting Mary (Annunciation)* begins this journey, and *Nativity with Angel* portrays the incarnation of the Lord. *Peace Be Still* is a stunning interpretation of his encounter on the Sea of Galilee with his disciples, and *The Last Supper* is a real testimony to the influence of historical art on Bostic's work. The show includes images of the death of Christ; *Crucifixion*, *Pietà*, and *Lamentation/Two Women at Jesus' Death*. *Angels Receive Orders from Jesus* offers us the finale to Cardboard Chronicles: The Biblical Art of Rudolph Bostic. ■

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophecy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 13:31-35

When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'