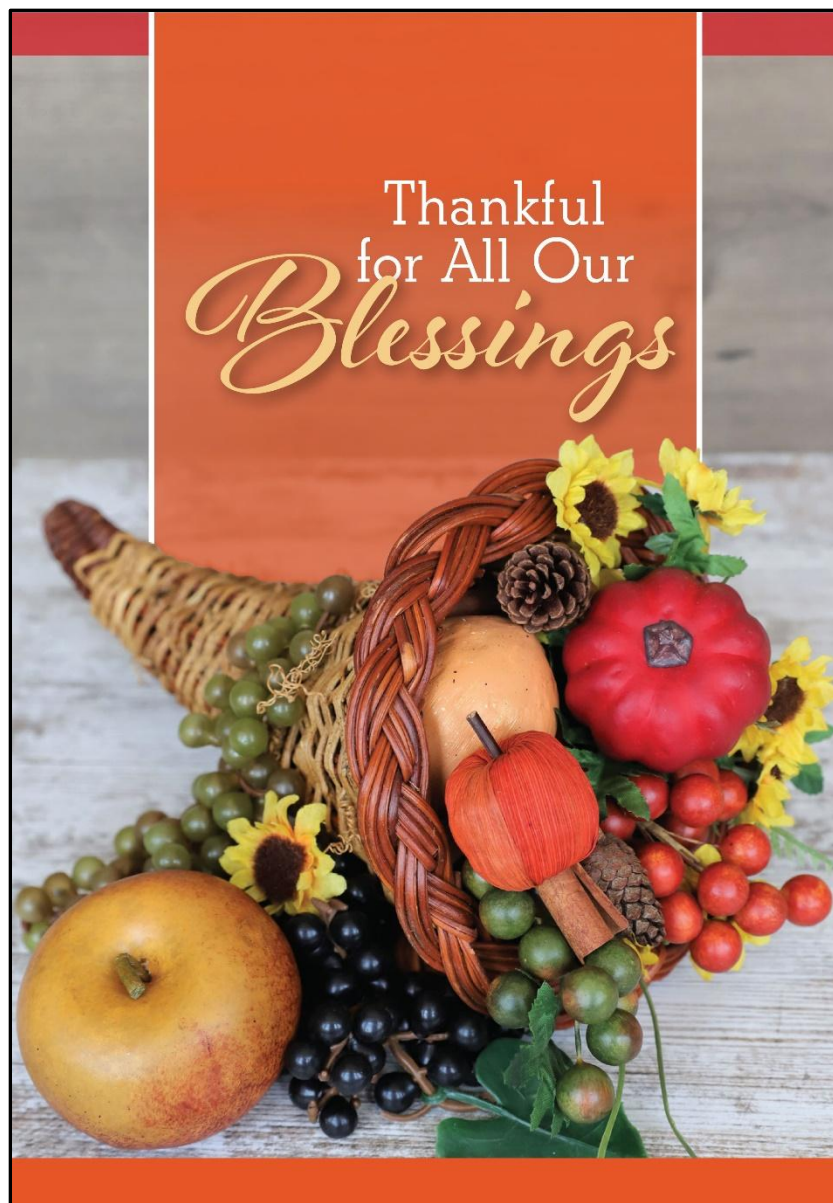


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

November 16, 2025



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

Giving Thanks Sunday

November 16, 2025

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 am

Gathering

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more.
It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity."

- Melody Beattie

"What separates privilege from entitlement is gratitude."

- Brene Brown

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today!

- 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.

**Our Mission is to Love God and
Serve People.**

**Everyone is welcome because
everyone matters.**

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Thank you, Generous God, for so many wondrous gifts.

P: **Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good!**

L: Thank you God, for our homes and families, for our church and friendship, for food and fellowship.

P: **Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good!**

L: Thank you God, for the smells of this thanksgiving season – pies and turkey, potatoes and dressing.

P: **Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good!**

L: Thank you God, for your Son Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, whose power enables us to share our bounty.

P: **Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good!**

All: **Come let us raise our hearts and voices, hands and very lives in thanksgiving to God who lives among us. Come let us worship!**

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Generous God, you have given us so much. Give us, we pray, one more thing.

P: Give us thankful hearts.

L: We know our hearts can be hard and cold.

P: Give us thankful hearts.

L: We often hold on when we should let go. We clutch when we should spend,
hoard when we could be generous, doubt when we should lean on faith.

P: Give us thankful hearts.

L: We are fearful instead of trusting in your everlasting care.

P: Give us thankful hearts.

L: Open our hands and our hearts to the bounty of your love.

P: Give us thankful hearts.

**All: Loving God, you have given us so much. Give us again the assurance of your
love and care, and fill us with grateful hearts and open hands. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: God's generosity is not hindered by our sin.

P: In Christ we are forgiven.

L: God's abundance is not stopped by our stinginess.

P: In Christ we are set free.

L: God's blessing is not contingent upon our love.

P: In Christ, God pours out grace on all people.

**All: Let us live as Christ's disciples, loving and forgiving others just as we are loved
and forgiven. 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**

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.

OFFERTORY (During the offertory, members of the church are invited to bring their tithes and pledges for the coming year as well as their weekly offering and place them on the communion table.)

Where Your Treasure Is

Refrain

Where your treas-ure is, there your heart shall be. All that
you pos-sess will nev - er set you free. Seek the
things that last; come and learn from me. Where your
treas-ure is, your heart shall be. be.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

L: Let us give God thanks...

P: **For homes that are warm and bellies that are full.**

L: Let us give God thanks...

P: **For the people we love today and for those who now rest from their labors.**

L: Let us give God thanks...

P: **For opportunities to grow in faith, love and service.**

All: **Bless, O God, the gifts we offer this day for the coming year. Together may we be your courageous disciples who worship faithfully, welcome openly, grow spiritually, care passionately and serve generously. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.**

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Philippians 4:4-9

PSALM 100 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation!

L: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

P: **Serve the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing.**

L: Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

P: **Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.**

L: Give thanks to him; bless his name.

P: **For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations. 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 and everywhere 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:

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.***

Lead Me, Guide Me

Congregation join on refrain:

***Lead me, guide me, along the way,
For if you lead me, I cannot stray.
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.
Lead me, oh Lord, lead me.***

I Come with Joy

Blue #706

In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful

***In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice!
Look to God, do not be afraid; lift up your voices, the Lord is near;
lift up your voices, the Lord is near.***

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

PRESENTATION OF SERVANT GIFTS TO 6th GRADERS

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

John 6:1-14

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

SPECIAL MUSIC

Come Flood This Heart of Mine

Chancel Choir

Arr. by David Lantz III

***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.

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

L: Friends in Christ, we are all received into the church through the sacrament of baptism. These friends have found nurture and support in the midst of this family of Christ. Through prayer and study they have been led by the Holy Spirit to affirm their baptism and to claim in our presence their covenantal relationship with Christ and the members of the church. They are here for service to Jesus Christ, using the gifts which the Holy Spirit bestows.

L: Friends, do you desire to affirm your baptism into the faith and family of Jesus Christ?

Candidates: I do.

L: Do you profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

Candidates: I do.

L: Do you promise, by the grace of God, to be Christ's disciple, to follow in the way of our Savior, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?

Candidates: I promise, with the help of God.

L: Do you promise, according to the grace given to you, to grow in the Christian faith and to be a faithful member of the church of Jesus Christ, celebrating Christ's presence and furthering Christ's mission to all the world?

Candidates: I promise, with the help of God.

L: By your baptism you were made one with us in the body of Christ, the church. Today we rejoice in your pilgrimage of faith which has brought you to this time and place. We give thanks for every community of faith that has been your spiritual home, and we celebrate your presence in this household of faith. Do you promise to participate in the life and mission of the family of God's people, sharing regularly in the worship of God and enlisting in the work of this local church as it serves this community and the world?

Candidates: I promise, with the help of God.

Moderator: Let us, the members of First Congregational United Church of Christ, express our welcome and affirm our mutual ministry in Christ.

All: We welcome you with joy in the common life of this church. We promise you our friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of the church of Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge and love, that we may be witnesses of our risen Savior.

Moderator: In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of First Congregational United Church of Christ, we extend to you the hand of Christian love, welcoming you into the company of this local church.

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.

Sending

***HYMN**

For the Fruit of All Creation

Blue #723

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

Reprinted music used by permission under the following licenses:
OneLicense.net A-703731; CCLI License 2892021

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Jill Paulson
Deacons: Laura Anderson, Paul Shepherd,
Kathy Tomlinson, Lance Lueck,
Melissa Oscanyan
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Rene Bylander, Lu Lueck
Trustee: Matt Meyer
Coffee
Fellowship: Giving Thanks Meal
Counters: Trish Graves, Mark Anderson
*Altar table flowers are given by Tanner and
Madeline Pietz in celebration of their 2nd
wedding anniversary on the 10th.*

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>Nov 9, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 10,742	\$ 472,582
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 478,035

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), Amy (friend of Barb and Larry Peterson), Chuck Kamorowski, Gayle (friend of Barb Stephens), Eric (friend of Liz Swank), Deb Larson, Lyle Woods, Don Larson, Robert Ostendorf, JoAnn Lentz

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those joining the church as members this Sunday, November 16th, may they discover faithful and joyful ways to find their place in their new church home
- For 6th graders receiving their Servant of Christ Aprons this Sunday, may they learn how to serve faithfully
- For our congregation as we dedicate our 2026 financial pledges this week, may generosity power our ministry
- For the new Among Friends director Brittany Myer who starts on Tuesday, may she lead with grace and be welcomed with joy
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

Prayers for our World:

- For food pantries dealing with so much demand, may communities generously support them and the people they serve
- For a safe and fruitful deer hunting season
- For those traveling over the Thanksgiving holiday, may you have uneventful trips there and back
- For the end to the government shutdown, may this never, ever happen again
- For the tentative peace in Gaza, may it lead to a just and lasting peace
- For the people of Ukraine as they battle for their freedom, may they be given strength and courage
- 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
- For those battling cancer, may they be given strength and support
- For those living with dementia and families trying to care for them, may they all be given strength, grace and help along the way

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For the Krueger family and their helpers whose behind the scenes work enables our Giving Thanks Meal again this year, God bless you all!
- For 10 years of generating clean solar energy with our church solar panels, thanks be to God!
- For all who are serving or have served in the military as we celebrated Veterans Day this past week, thank you for your service
- For the gift of bread, may it nourish our bodies, souls and spirit
- For the 40 some people who turned out to clean up our church grounds recently, you rock!
- For our church musicians who each week bring their gifts to grace our worship service, thank you!

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For Joe Smith, brother of Christina Krueger, who died suddenly and whose Celebration of Life will be this Sunday, may they be given strength
- For those who mourn, especially the families of Steve Hove, Tom Hall, 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.

NEW MEMBERS

Jeff and Heidi Cavaness – Jeff & I have been married for 28 years & have 3 adult children. We moved to River Falls last summer from Tomah, WI, to be closer to family in Ellsworth and the Twin Cities. Jeff is originally from Idaho, and I grew up in Hager City, WI. We are looking forward to becoming part of a community doing good works.



Jacob and Anna Morrison – We are so happy to be settling into life here in RF and becoming part of this church community. My husband, Jacob, grew up in Phoenix, AZ, & I grew up in both the Twin Cities & Denton, TX. We met through a mutual friend when I moved to Tempe, shortly after college to begin teaching at a Lutheran grade school. After getting married, life took us on quite a journey—from Arizona to Texas in 2014. I switched careers from teaching to financial services when we moved to Fort Worth, TX. We lived in the DFW area for nearly ten years, but moved to Chippewa Falls for a new job opportunity & the chance to experience small-town life in 2024. The new job was short-lived & didn't quite work out as planned, so I found a new role with my previous employer in Oakdale, MN & we moved to River Falls in June. It's been a great fit so far & throughout it all reminded us that God is faithful, & his plans are better than ours. We've been blessed with 4 children—Hazel (12), who's at Meyer Middle School; Lyla (9), who's at Rocky Branch Elementary; Malakai (4), who goes to preschool; & Stella (2) who enjoys lots of attention from her siblings. Jacob has been our family's stay-at-home parent since Malakai was born & does an amazing job keeping everything running smoothly. We're so grateful to be here and look forward to getting to know everyone who's a part of this church community.



Tom and Melissa Oscanyan – Tom and Melissa live in Hudson, WI. We came to First Congregational Church at the invitation of our dear friends Ann and Scott Nelson. We enjoy music (and both sing in the River City Chorale), boating, reading, good dining, and travel. Melissa is a puzzle aficionado and Tom is in a chess club. And they have twin adult sons.

Tanner and Madeline Pietz – We are originally from Aberdeen, South Dakota, and will have been Wisconsinites for a year this August! Tanner is a vocal music teacher at Meyer Middle School and River Falls High School. Madeline is entering the second year of her master's program at UW Stout for Mental Health Counseling. Our family consists of the two of us and our sweet cat, Benny. We are so grateful to be a part of the wonderful community of River Falls and to be joining First Congregational.



Tracy Ronnander – I am married to Tim, & we have two boys Cody and Wil. I work for the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a wildland firefighter and land manager. I enjoy spending time watching both boys play football, basketball & baseball, I even got the chance to coach several teams along the way. When there is spare time, I can be found working, skiing, motorcycling, snowmobiling, & 4-wheeling in the outdoors. I look forward to joining this amazing congregation.



Elizabeth Swank – Most people know me as Liz or as Alex's mom. I love the title "Alex's mom," & it is the greatest blessing to have such a wonderful son. My husband Thomas & I have lived in River Falls for over 14 years. I am an attorney in the government sector & have worked as a government attorney since 2003. I practice law in MN, but I'm also licensed in WI. I have spent my career fighting for justice for some of the most vulnerable people. When I'm not in the office, I enjoy spending time with my son, husband, mother & friends in the community. Alex, Thomas & I have 2 fur babies (dogs) & several fish, which of course Alex has named. Alex enjoys Scouts, soccer, gymnastics, theatre and swimming. He is 7 years old & attends school in River Falls. Like his parents, he's always up for an adventure. He is smart, creative, & one of the kindest people you will ever meet. Thank you for welcoming us with open arms to join this wonderful church community.



Victoria Swank – My name is Victoria Swank, but I go by Vicki. I am a mother of 4 grown successful children & a grandmother of 5 wonderful boys. I am originally from Missouri where I raised my children on a farm. I was baptized & confirmed Lutheran. I was an international educator who worked and lived in 10 countries over a 20-year period which included Brazil, China, Romania, India, Libya, South Korea, Turkey, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, & Albania. I moved back to the States during Covid & decided to settle in River Falls so I could be close to my daughter Elizabeth, Thomas & my grandson Alex. I am now retired after teaching for almost 40 years in rural, inter-city, & overseas schools. I am now taking art classes at UWRF. Thank you for welcoming me to this church community.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As for the things that you have learned and received and heard and noticed in me, do them, and the God of peace will be with you.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 6:1-14

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place, so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."