

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

November 23, 2025



Reign of Christ Sunday

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

November 23, 2025

Reign of Christ Sunday

10:00 am

Gathering

“Power, no matter how well-intentioned, tends to cause suffering. Love, being vulnerable, absorbs it. In a point of convergence on a hill called Calvary, God renounced the one for the sake of the other.” - Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*

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.
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GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP (taken from Psalm 100)

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

P: **Worship the Lord with gladness; come into God's presence with singing.**

L: Know that the Lord is God. God made us, and we are God's people.

P: **Enter God's house with thanksgiving and praise.**

L: Thank God and bless God's holy name.

P: **The Lord is good. God's steadfast love endures forever.**

L: God's faithfulness knows no end.

P: **Praise the Lord! Let us worship with our whole hearts.**

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

***HYMN**

Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart

Blue #113

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of Love, you created us to love you and one another. We confess that we have sometimes limited that love to words and failed to make that love real by our actions. We have failed to recognize Christ in the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the sick and the stranger. Too often, we failed to share what we have with our brothers and sisters in need. Turn our hearts and guide us to follow in your ways anew. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

- L: Hear these words: God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- P: **God is good to all, and has compassion for all creation.**
- L: Let us live then as God's thankful people,
- P: **Forgiving one another and ourselves.**
- 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**

Love is Flowing

*Love is flowing: love is flowing, love is flowing from the fountain of life;
Love is flowing: love is flowing, love is flowing from the fountain of life.*

*Grace is flooding: grace is flooding, grace is flooding from the fountain of life.
Grace is flooding: grace is flooding, grace is flooding from the fountain of life.*

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Colossians 1:11-20

PSALM 46 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.*

- L: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
- P: **Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.**
- L: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.
- P: **God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.**
- L: The nations are in an uproar; the kingdoms totter; God utters and the earth melts.
- P: **The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.**
- L: Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations God has brought on the earth.

P: God makes wars cease to the end of the earth; God breaks the bow and shatters the spear; God burns the shields with fire.

L: “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth.”

P: The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. 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: Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! People come from the east and the west, from the north and the south to sit at the table in the kingdom of God. When our Risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them; then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. This is the Lord’s table, not ours, and our Savior Jesus Christ invites those who trust him to share the feast that he has prepared.

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

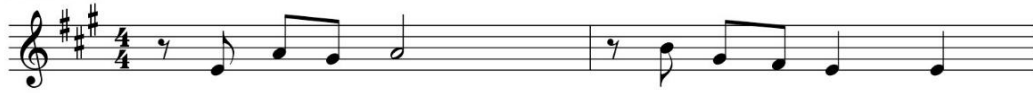
Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

Bread for the World

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain



Bread for the world:

a world of hun - ger.



Wine for all peo - ples:

peo-ple who thirst.

May we who eat



be bread for oth - ers.

May we who drink

pour out our love.

As Saints of Old Their First-fruits Brought

Blue #570

We Praise You, O God

Blue #726

The Gift of Love

Blue #397

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.)

*Jesus loves me! This I know, as he loved so long ago,
Taking children on his knee, saying, "Let them come to me."
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – United Church of Canada**

L: We are not alone, we live in God's world.

P: We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust in God. We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

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

Awake! Sing Gloria!

Chancel Choir

Arr. by Joseph Martin

***OFFERTORY**

Now Thank We All Our God

Blue #14

*Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done, in whom this 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**

O Lord, may our lives reflect the praises that we sing. We have received grace upon grace, so may we live in grace with one another. We have received forgiveness, so may we forgive. We have received gifts far beyond our need, so may we give. Bless these gifts given this day and always. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

You Servants of God

Black #305

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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Bulletin cover: The Risen Lord by artist James He Qi.

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Marie Roe
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Ann Nelson,
Loral Keil, Brian Miller,
Melissa Oscanyan
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Marg Downing
Trustee: Tim Bylander
Coffee
Fellowship: Marie Roe, Barb Peterson,
Personnel Committee
Counters: Diane Welsh, Vicki Sippel
*Altar table flowers are given by the Personnel
Committee in gratitude for Pastor Chris' and
Pastor Stacy's combined 60 years of ministry.*

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 16, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 8,361	\$ 492,908
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 488,658

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, Don Larson, Jim Filkins, Rhonda Klink

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those who will receive Amaryllis bulbs and Giving Tree gifts, may they bring God's love closer to all who give and receive them
- For those who joined the church as members last Sunday, November 16th, may they discover faithful and joyful ways to find their place in their new church home
- For 6th graders who received their Servant of Christ Aprons last Sunday, may they learn how to serve faithfully
- For our congregation as we dedicate our 2026 financial pledges, may generosity power our ministry
- For the new Among Friends director Brittany Myer who started 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 those traveling over the Thanksgiving holiday, may you have uneventful trips there and back
- 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 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 return of our Advent Evening Prayer worship services Wednesday, December 3, 10 and 17, may they kindle hope and joy with Advent season
- For the Krueger family and their helpers whose behind the scenes work enabled 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 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 family and friends of Joe Smith, brother of Christina Krueger, who died suddenly and whose Celebration of Life was last Sunday, may his family 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.

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!

Update from the Personnel Committee: The part-time Minister for Community position remains open. This job was held for many years by Dave Ostendorf and more recently by Deb Myer. There are a limited number of potential qualified candidates for a position like this. The committee has initiated a broader search & increased our focus on this hire. There are a couple candidates who have expressed interest that we are considering. The Personnel Committee continues to solicit more applications. If you know of anyone who could be a good fit for this position—or know someone who might know someone—please have them contact Pastor Chris at: chris@firstchurchrf.org or Alan Tuchtenhagen, Chair of the Personnel Committee at: alantuchtenhagen@gmail.com

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. Copies of the discussion book are available for \$20.00 in the church office. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

2026 Financial Pledges: If you did not return yours, please do so today. We need all of our church families and friends to make a financial commitment to support and fund the mission & ministry of the church. These pledges pay for our programs and buildings, mission and staff. Please return your pledge in the offering plate or the church office. Thank you.

Advent Evening Prayer: Each Wednesday in Advent, we gather for worship using the Holden Evening Prayer Service of simple songs, scripture and stories. Join us on **Wed, Dec 8, 10 & 17 at 6:30 pm** in the sanctuary for the absolutely lovely thirty-minute worship service. Youth Groups, Confirmation Classes and Interns, will all start in worship and then move to class afterward.

Loving Neighbor

Reverse Advent Calendars: “Reverse” reminds us Advent is a season of giving. Rather than getting candy each day, we will be adding a food item to the grocery bag. Each bag has a list of suggested donations, but you can add whatever you want. When the bag is full, bring it in. The Mission Ed Committee will bring the bags to the Food Pantry at the end of December. Thank you!

Sharing Families Giving Tree: If you would like to help some children have a better Christmas this year, please select an ornament from the tree and purchase a gift from their wish list. **The unwrapped gift with the ornament needs to be at the church no later than noon Thurs, Dec 11.** Please give the gift cards to the church office. If you would like to make a cash donation, please make out to First Congregational Church with “Sharing Families” in the memo line. Thank you for your generosity. If you have questions, please contact Diane Welsh (651-334-3128 or 715-386-6620).

Christmas Shoebox: The drive for donations for Christmas Shoebox items for the gentlemen at Kinnic Falls Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services has begun. If you would rather donate cash, just designate it for the Christmas Shoebox. **Donations are due by Dec 11.** The list of items needed is on the gathering table.

Bring Christmas Joy! Each year we invite members of the church family to deliver an amaryllis plant to one of our shut-ins or special church friends. This is a wonderful, family-friendly activity that brings joy to both the giver & recipient. Simply sign up at church, prepare the amaryllis plant, and deliver it. Feel free to add some cookies if you wish.

The Christmas Fund: The Christmas Fund has been caring for active & retired clergy & lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities & health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gifts to our lower income retirees. This year, your care & compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. There are envelopes on the gathering table. Thank you for your generosity.

Basics for Local Kids: The next few months will be busy times at BLK and volunteers are needed. You can help families shop or you can help sort, restock or organize winter wear. Shifts are usually 2 hours and new days and times are available. To sign up for a day and time that works for you, go to <https://www.basicsforlocalkids.org/> or call Kim at 715-821-1623. Contact Renee Whipple at 715-307-5074 if you have any questions.

Simpson Shelter Supply Needs: Women’s white crew socks, men’s white crew socks, men’s t-shirts sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL, personal size shampoo, personal size conditioner, personal size body lotion, rain ponchos, eye masks, umbrellas, washcloths, padlocks, good buys on out-of-season clothing. All items MUST BE NEW. There is a box at the church 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.

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

Learning Community: Exploring Polarization: Tues, Nov 25, 6:30 pm: American legislatures are more polarized today than at any moment in the past half-century, and there is little end in sight. Two important questions are: Why are American legislatures so polarized? And what policies might help bridge this growing ideological gulf? In the upcoming Learning Community event, Andy Myers (congregation member and PhD candidate in Political Economics) will present his ongoing research that helps address these questions, focusing on campaign finance, local press coverage, election administration, and candidate supply. **It is possible to allow fear and impressions to dominate one's understanding of issues. This presentation will be a nonpartisan conversation focused on data-driven evidence to help people explore an important challenge of the day.** Please sign up.

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 meetings are **Dec 2 & 16.**

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 **Nov 25 & Dec 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 & 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

Wednesday Meals: On Wednesday nights, we offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$9 per person with a family max of \$30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:00 pm.** You can get your meal to go if you go through the line (indicate when you sign up). **Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays.** Please sign up at church or online. **No meal next week because it's Thanksgiving week. The next meal will be December 3rd.**

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve: Poinsettia sales in honor or memory of someone special have begun. The order forms are on the table. The cost is \$15.00 each. Please return the order form with payment by **Dec 14.** The plants will be on display for the Christmas Eve services. You may pick your plants up after the 10pm service. Proceeds of the sales go toward youth activities.

Cookie Exchange: The WISE team has a Cookie Exchange planned for **Sunday, December 7** in the Fellowship Hall following service. Please bring four dozen cookies. Place six cookies in a baggie or clear container, labeling it with the cookie type and recipe. You will go home with eight different types of cookies. Please sign up at church.

Annual Christmas Luncheon: You are invited to attend a Christmas Luncheon on **Tues, Dec 9, at 12:00 noon.** The menu features Norwegian meatballs and a large collection of Christmas cookies. Please come! The cost is \$10.00 per person. Please make a reservation by calling the church office, at church or online.

Volunteers Needed for the Christmas Luncheon: Please volunteer to help with the Christmas luncheon. We need cooks, kitchen workers, and cookie bakers. Please indicate your willingness to help by signing up at church.

The Advent Workshop: The Advent Workshop for families will be in the Fellowship Hall following Sunday School on **Dec 7**, the Second Sunday in Advent. The event includes making a variety of Christmas ornaments. If you have friends or neighbors considering participation in a church family, invite them to join you! Please sign up.

Name Tags: We encourage you to wear your name tags so that new people and some not so new, can call you by name. It would also help the deacons when you take communion. If you do not have one, please let Missy in the church office know at missy@firstchurchrf.org. In appreciation, the Welcoming Committee.

Youth Events

Children's Advent Musical: Sunday School children in pre-school through grade 5 have begun rehearsing the 2025 Advent Musical during Sunday School. The dress rehearsal will be on Saturday, December 20, 10:00–12:00 noon. The musical will be presented during worship on Sunday, December 21. It is important for all children to regularly attend Sunday School and be present for these rehearsals.

Learning Community

EXPLORING POLARIZATION

- Why are American legislatures so polarized?
- What policies might help bridge the growing ideological gulf?

Nonpartisan conversation
All are welcome



Andrew Myers

Stanford Ph.D. Candidate
Political Economics

NOVEMBER 25, 2025, 6:30 PM

First Congregational Church
110 N. Third St. | River Falls, WI



SCRIPTURE LESSON: Colossians 1:11-20

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, so that you may have all endurance and patience, joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 1:67-79

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

‘Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of his servant David,
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.’