

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

**December 21, 2025**



**Love**

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

December 21, 2025

*Fourth Sunday of Advent*

10:00 am

**Gathering**

Welcome, all wonders in one sight!  
Eternity shut in a span;  
Summer in winter; day in night;  
Heaven in earth, and God in man.  
Great little one, whose all-embracing birth  
Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heav'n to earth.

Richard Crashaw, 17th century English poet and Anglican priest

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:** The fourth candle is the candle of LOVE. In love, God sent Jesus to live among us.

**P:** **Because of his coming and his love, we and the rest of creation know his salvation.**

**L:** Nothing makes sense without love. Love transforms justice to compassion, interest to concern, wisdom to understanding. Love lasts when all else fails.

(Light the fourth Advent candle)

**L:** God of all, who incarnated love in your Son, help us to love even as you have loved us.

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

**\*HYMN**

*Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

**Blue #153**

**\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**L:** Gracious God, we praise you for sending light into this world.

**P:** **Forgive us for living in darkness.**

**L:** We praise you for the faith of your servant Mary.

**P: Forgive us for our lack of faith.**

**L: We praise you for the passion of your servant John.**

**P: Forgive us for our tepid response to your coming among us.**

**L: We praise you for the promise of Emmanuel, God with us, who comes to our world.**

**P: Forgive us when we fail to look for him in our lives. Amen.**

**\*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

**L: The truth of Advent is this: God is coming to us! We are not alone.**

**P: Come, Lord Jesus!**

**L: In Christ we are accepted and forgiven.**

**P: We are set free from the past. We are given to the future.**

**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**

***He Came Down***

***He came down that we may have joy; He came down that we may have joy;  
Hallelujah forevermore.***

***He came down that we may have love; He came down that we may have love;  
Hallelujah forevermore.***

<b>Hearing the Word</b>
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**SCRIPTURE LESSON**

**Isaiah 7:10-16**

**PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)**

Response  
Unison

Antiphon: Emma Lou Diemer, 1994

Stead - fast love sur - rounds those who trust in God.

**L: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!**

**P: You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.**

L: Stir up your might, and come to save us!

P: **Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

L: O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

P: **You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure. R**

L: You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves.

P: **Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

L: But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself.

P: **Then we will never turn back from you;**

L: Give us life, and we will call on your name.

P: **Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. R**

<b>Proclaiming the Word</b>
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**GOSPEL LESSON**

**Luke 1:67-80**

**CHILDREN'S MUSICAL: Miracle on Bethlehem Street, by Lowell Alexander**

***Bethlehem is Busy***

*Bethlehem is busy, delightfully dizzy; Hustle and bustle on the city streets.*

*Bethlehem is busy, all in a tizzy; it's truly quite a sight to see.*

*There are crowds of people on the road gathering from far and near.*

*Seems that everyone is on the go and ev'ryone is coming here.*

*Bethlehem is busy, delightfully dizzy; Hustle and bustle on the city streets.*

*Bethlehem is busy, all in a tizzy; it's truly quite a sight to see.*

*There is expectation ev'rywhere and this is just a tiny part.*

*There is something special in the air, I can feel it in my heart.*

*Bethlehem is busy, delightfully dizzy; Hustle and bustle on the city streets.*

*Bethlehem is busy, all in a tizzy; it's truly quite a sight to see.*

***Dollars and Census***

*Dollars and census, they're gonna tax us;*

*All the people away from their homes will have to pay to rest their tired bones.*

*Dollars and census, what's all the big fuss?*

*They go together like sand and sandals, dollars and census.*

*Dollars and census, it's like a gold rush.  
A little luck with all his talents is gonna boost his old bank balance.  
Dollars and census, what's all the big fuss?  
They go together like humps and camels, dollars and census.*

*I must admit when I sleep at night I find,  
Instead of counting sheep, I'm counting dollar signs.  
Dollars and census, I think I'm in love.  
I know the pairing will be quite healthy, I feel good when I'm good and wealthy.*

### ***Make a Place***

*Who are these two I have seen in my mind?  
Could it be true, could this be Messiah's time?  
One is with child the other one guides the way.  
Both are weary, where will they find to stay?  
God, make a place for them, here in Bethlehem, to give birth.  
God, make a place for Him, in the hearts of all, here on earth.*

*I am kneeling, be with them as they go.  
A strange warm feeling is stirring inside my soul.*

*God, make a place for them, here in Bethlehem, to give birth.  
God, make a place for Him, in the hearts of all, here on earth.*

### ***Everybody Wants to Stay***

*I'm thrilled, we're filled right to the rim. It's fact, we're packed here at the inn.  
But for the right price I will sell to you a special suite in my lavish motel.*

*Everybody wants to stay with me. Everybody wants his own room key.  
I admit my rates are robbery but everybody wants to stay with me.*

*A switch, he's rich from just one night. His vice is his prices are outta sight.  
We know it looks full but as you see you can stay in his room if you have enough money.*

*Everybody wants to stay with us. People saying Bethlehem or bust.  
We admit it costs way too much but everybody wants to stay with us.*

### ***While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks***

*While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground,  
the angel of the Lord came down, and glory shone around, and glory shone around.*

*To you in David's town, this day is born of David's line  
the Savior who is Christ the Lord, and this shall be the sign, and this shall be the sign:*

*The heavenly babe you there shall find to human view displayed,  
all meanly wrapped in swathing bands and in a manger laid, and in a manger laid.*

### ***Away in a Manger***

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;  
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky and stay by my side until morning  
is nigh.*

### ***Miracle on Bethlehem Street***

*People tomorrow will wake to a world That still looks the same, but is new.  
For people tomorrow will live in a place Where the promise of Jesus has come true.*

*There's a miracle on Bethlehem street, Lying asleep, beneath the starlight.  
For the miracle on Bethlehem street is the child born there tonight.*

*There's a miracle on Bethlehem street, Lying asleep, beneath the starlight.  
For the miracle on Bethlehem street is the child born there tonight.*

### ***Receive the King***

*Receive the King, Let the bells ring, Let every heart sing hallelujah!  
Receive the King, Give your voice wings, Let every heart sing hallelujah!*

*Hallelu, hallelujah! Hallelu, hallelujah! Hallelu, hallelujah! Hallelu, hallelujah!*

*Receive the King, Let the bells ring, Let every heart sing hallelujah!  
Receive the King, Give your voice wings, Let every heart sing hallelujah!*

*O come, let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him,  
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!*

**\*STATEMENT OF FAITH for Advent**

**L:** In quietness and darkness, in peace and confusion, Jesus Christ wants to make his home and meet his friends. He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope for the world.**

**L:** In him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant;

**P:** **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

**L:** He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope of the world.**

**L:** In him there is neither black nor white, neither north nor south;

**P:** **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

**L:** He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope of the world.**

**L:** In him there is neither male nor female, neither master nor servant;

**P:** **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

**L:** He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope of the world.**

**L:** He is the light of life:

**P:** **He is the hope of the world. 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.**

**\*OFFERTORY (sung twice)      *Prepare the Way of the Lord***

***Prepare the way of the Lord. Prepare the way of the Lord,  
and all people will see the salvation of our God.***

**\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**Great God of Adventure and Advent, come again to our lives and to our church. Come to us with new strength and vitality. Help us in these days of expectation and preparation to get ready for the amazing arrival again of the Baby of Bethlehem. Give us generous hearts as we seek to welcome him. Amen.**

## 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: Brothers and sisters in Christ, as we wait and watch during this Advent season, we pray along with your servant Mary:
- P: Maranatha, come Lord Jesus, open our eyes that we might see you!**
- L: As we look for signs of Emmanuel, God with all of us, we pray:
- P: Maranatha, come Lord Jesus, open our ears that we might hear you!**
- L: As we wait and watch, prepare and get ready for the arrival of the Messiah yet again, we pray:
- P: Maranatha, come Lord Jesus, open our hands that we might serve you!**
- All: So come let us gather together at the table of our Lord.**

### *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*

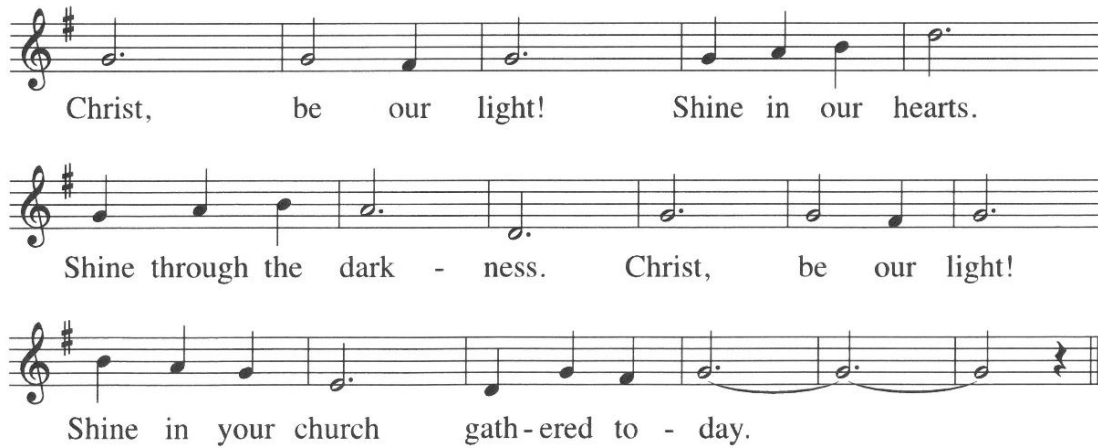
*Hymns during the distribution of the elements:*

### *Come, Let us Eat*

**Blue #694**



**Christ Be Our Light**  
*Congregation join on refrain*



**Wait for the Lord**  
**Blue #166**



***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.

<b>Sending</b>
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**\*HYMN**

***All Earth Is Hopeful***  
*Verses 1, 2, and 3*

**Blue #163**

**\*BLESSING**

**POSTLUDE**

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## **SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS**

Preacher: Chris Myers  
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers  
Cantor: David Reilly  
Liturgist: Carole Mottaz  
Deacons: Laura Anderson, Liz Swank,  
Becky Pajac, Heidi Cavaness,  
Melissa Oscanyan  
Organist: Marsha Pearson  
Nursery: Kahla Fuller  
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman  
Welcomers: Norma Revels, Lu Lueck  
Trustee: Andy Krueger  
Coffee  
Fellowship: Welcoming Ministry –  
St. B's donuts  
Counters: Diane Welsh, Mark Andeson  
*Altar table flowers are given by Karri Van Dell  
in memory of Peggy Thompson.*

## **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

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### **Treasurer's Report**

	<u>Dec 14, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 7,585	\$ 533,887
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 531,150

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'



## **Christmas Eve Worship Services**

**4:00 pm Family Worship with Children's Story, Communion and Candles**

**10:00 pm Worship with Choir, Communion and Candles**

**Please join us as we welcome the Christ child into our world and lives  
and consider inviting a friend**

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

**Those who are ill or recovering:**

Barbara de Souza, Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Glen Corliss (brother of Raelle Jorae), Eric (friend of Liz Swank), Don Larson, Rhonda Klink, Elaine (friend of Janice Healy), Emily Rognholt (sister of Missy Linnaberry)

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

- For our church kids performing their Christmas program this Sunday, may they grow in faith and share their story in front of a packed and grateful congregation
- For our Merry Widows group who had their Christmas luncheon this past Wednesday and who mourn the death of their founder and organizer JoAnn Lentz, may their hearts be comforted as they remember with gratitude JoAnn's many wonderful gifts and contributions to finding hope amidst the real pain of death
- For Tim Bylander our faithful and busy snow removal guy who has been BUSY and for our custodian Troy Zakrzewski who has been constantly mopping floors, we appreciate your efforts!
- 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 our congregation as we dedicate our 2026 financial pledges, may generosity power our ministry
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

**Prayers for our World:**

- For those traveling over the Christmas and New Year's break, may they come and go safely
- For those killed in shootings in Sydney and Brown University, may their families be comforted and all of us examine our hearts about why these keep happening
- For food pantries dealing with so much demand, may communities generously support them and the people they serve
- 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 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 Christmas trees gracing our Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall donated by the Noreen family, they are beautiful
- For our choir and church musicians who led Advent Evening Prayer and will grace us on Christmas Eve
- For the Reverse Advent Calendar, a time to give instead of receive during Advent, may God's people be fed
- 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 the family of JoAnn Lentz who died unexpectedly this past week, may they be comforted (funeral plans are pending at this time)
- For the family of Jim Filkins who died recently, may his wife Marge, son Louie and their families be comforted (a Memorial Service is planned here at church for Saturday, January 17th at 11am)
- For those who mourn, especially the families of Roland Erickson (father of Karl), 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.

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: Isaiah 7:10-16**

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. Then Isaiah said: 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

**GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 1:67-80**

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.'

The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.