

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

January 11, 2026



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

January 11, 2026

Baptism of Christ

10:00 am

Gathering

For all you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
Galatians 3:27

<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 style="text-align: center;">Our Mission is to Love God and Serve People.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Everyone is welcome because everyone matters.</p>
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GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

- L: Come, all you who are thirsty. Come to the source of living water.
- P: **Some of us feel flooded – too much to do too soon. We feel in danger of going under.**
- L: Come, rest beside the still waters and feel the ease of the cool stream.
- P: **Some of us feel empty – always giving and pouring ourselves out with no time to tap into the Source.**
- L: Come, taste the eternal springs of living water, drink deep and long.
- P: **Some of us feel blocked and stagnant – judgments, denials, wounds and frustrations limiting the flow of grace.**
- L: Come, be plunged deep into the healing waters and fresh rivers of God's love.
- P: **We come to touch the living water and remember our baptism. Let the joyful water flow!**
- All: **Come let us worship the Lord our God who leads us into life!**

***HYMN**

Shall We Gather at the River

Blue #522

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Loving God, **your love for us reaches from the cradle to the grave. There is no place or time or situation in which we are cut off from your care. Remind us of that love whenever we doubt our own worth, forget our blessing in baptism or act out of fear or anger. Forgive us for finding life boring or predictable, filled with routine and sameness when you have placed us in a garden. Turn our world upside down occasionally and surprise us with grace and joy. Keep us forever amazed at your love. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Holy God, you restore our souls and lead us to the house of love.

P: In the waters of baptism, you call, claim and free us.

L: In Christ, we are forgiven.

P: 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**

Alleluia! Give the Glory

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Give the glory and the honor to the Lord!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Give the glory and the honor to the Lord!

BAPTISM OF EVELYN ADELE SITZ

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 Evelyn Adele Sitz. 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 this child, will you encourage her 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 her that she may be led to profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by sharing with her the church's life, worship, and fellowship?

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

- L: Christ will first be known to Evelyn by the Christ seen in your home. By the grace of God, will you model the Christian life for her, provide instruction in the Christian faith, and live with her in the covenant of baptism so that she 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 Evelyn into the life of the church? Will you learn, play, and explore God's world with her?

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 Evelyn 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 servant Evelyn who will be baptized this day, that she 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, Evelyn, 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 this child 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.**

Name: Evelyn Adele Sitz

Born: January 10, 2025

Baptized: January 11, 2026

Evelyn's parents are Daniel and Heather Sitz

Evelyn's sponsors are Mike and Natasha Swanson, Cody Lauer

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 42:1-9

PSALM 29 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)



- L: Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- P: Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name; worship the LORD in holy splendor.**
- L: The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over mighty waters.
- P: The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.**
- L: The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.
- P: The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.**
- L: The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
- P: The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'**
- L: The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.
- P: May the LORD give strength to his people! May God bless God's people with peace! R**

<p>Celebrating the Meal</p>

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! Here at this table we remember God's gift poured out for us:
- P: Water to renew us, refresh us, and welcome us into God's family.**
- L: Bread to feed our bodies and souls.
- P: The cup to quench our thirst and bring us joy.**
- All: Come let us gather 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:

Borning Cry

Blue #680

Jesus Loves Me

Blue #437

Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

Blue #326

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.)

***He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the whole wide world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands.***

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 3:13-17

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

*HYMN

We Were Baptized in Christ Jesus

1 We were bap-tized in Christ Je - sus, we were bap-tized in his death;
 2 In the wa - ter and the wit-ness, in the break-ing of the bread,
 3 Glo-ry be to God the Fa - ther, glo-ry be to Christ the Son,

that as Christ was raised vic - to - rious, we might live a brand new life.
 in the wait - ing arms of Je - sus who is ris - en from the dead,
 glo-ry to the Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er three and ev - er one;

And if we have been u - nit - ed in a dread-ful death like his,
 God has made a new be - gin - ning from the ash - es of our past;
 as it was in the be - gin - ning, glo - ry now re-sounds a - gain

we will all be re - u - nit - ed, for he lives.
 in the los - ing and the win - ning we hold fast.
 in a song that has no end - ing. A - men

***STATEMENT OF FAITH - Indonesia**

I believe in God, who is love and who has given the earth to all people.

I believe in Jesus Christ, who came to heal us, and to free us from all forms of oppression.

I believe in the Spirit of God, who works in and through all who are turned toward the truth.

I believe in the community of faith, which is called to be at the service of all people.

I believe in God's promise to finally destroy the power of sin in us all, and to establish the kingdom of justice and peace for all humankind.

I do not believe that suffering need be in vain, that death is the end, that the disfigurement of our world is what God intended.

But I dare to believe, always and in spite of everything, in God's power to transform and transfigure, fulfilling the promise of a new heaven and a new earth where justice and peace will flourish. 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

This Little Light of Mine

Chancel Choir

Arr. by John Leavitt

***OFFERTORY**

Let Us Bring Every Gift



Let us bring ev - 'ry gift, let us trea - sure ev - 'ry grace: As you've giv - en to us, let us share.



In our neigh bor to day we will meet you face to face, Let your love be the rule ev - 'ry - where.

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Creator God, you are the source and the giver of all good gifts. We thank you for the abundant blessings of your love, your forgiveness and your grace. Please accept these gifts of time, talent, and treasure as our cheerful response to your overflowing goodness in our lives. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

Go, My Children, with My Blessing

Blue #719

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Traci Hagberg
Deacons: Jena Most, Becky Pajac,
Liz Swank, Melissa Oscanyan,
Laura Anderson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Diane Olson
Trustee: Louie Filkins
Coffee
Fellowship: Alice Reilly-Myklebust & Evie
Counters: Diane Welsh, Allen Barnes
*Altar table flowers are given by the Sitz family in
celebration of the baptism of Evelyn Sitz and are
given by Lillian Tan in memory of Dr. James
Tandias and Lily T. Wong.*

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

Dec 31, 2025

General Fund Income	\$ 557,322.26
General Fund Expenses	\$ 549,379.68
2025 Net Income	\$ 7,942.58

Jan 4, 2026

General Fund Income*	\$ 34,546.22
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A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

A new budget will be approved at the Feb 1 Annual Meeting.



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), Glen Corliss (brother of Raelle Jorae), Eric (friend of Liz Swank), Don Larson, Elaine (friend of Janice Healy), Emily Rognholt (sister of Missy Linaberry), Arlene Johnson, Lee Lueck, Blake Friese, Barb Mahoney

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our congregation as it meets for its Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 1 and for church leaders compiling Annual Reports which are due Monday, January 12, may we faithfully celebrate our 2025 accomplishments
- For our committees and teams who meet on Tuesday, January 20th for our All Church Meeting Night, may we have the mind and heart of Christ as we seek to love God and serve people
- For our Merry Widows group mourning the recent death of JoAnn Lentz who founded this group, may you grieve in faith and gratitude
- For Deb Hoffman who has again been delivering poinsettias to shut-ins and special friends, thank you!
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

Prayers for our World:

- For our return to 'regular time' after the Christmas break, may you be given good work to do
- For those in our church and community living in fear with recent immigration raids
- For food pantries dealing with so much demand, may communities generously support them and the people they serve
- For stability and peace in Venezuela and Ukraine
- 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 heads of our church teams and committees compiling their 2025 Annual Reports for the 2025 Annual Meeting on February 1, may you deftly and joyfully summarize your accomplishments
- For our church secretary Missy Luedtke compiling the Annual Report and keeping us all on track, bless you
- For Farnum Fuller and Tim Bylander who took down our church Christmas Trees and Troy Zakrzewski who vacuumed up a LOT of pine needles, thank you!
- For 10 years of generating clean solar energy with our church solar panels, thanks be to God!

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of JoAnn Lentz who died recently, 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)

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 42:1-9

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

What does joy look like? Like this. 40 elementary school kids and their helpers at Wednesday School! Thank you to all who drive, provide snacks and volunteer to make this program possible.

