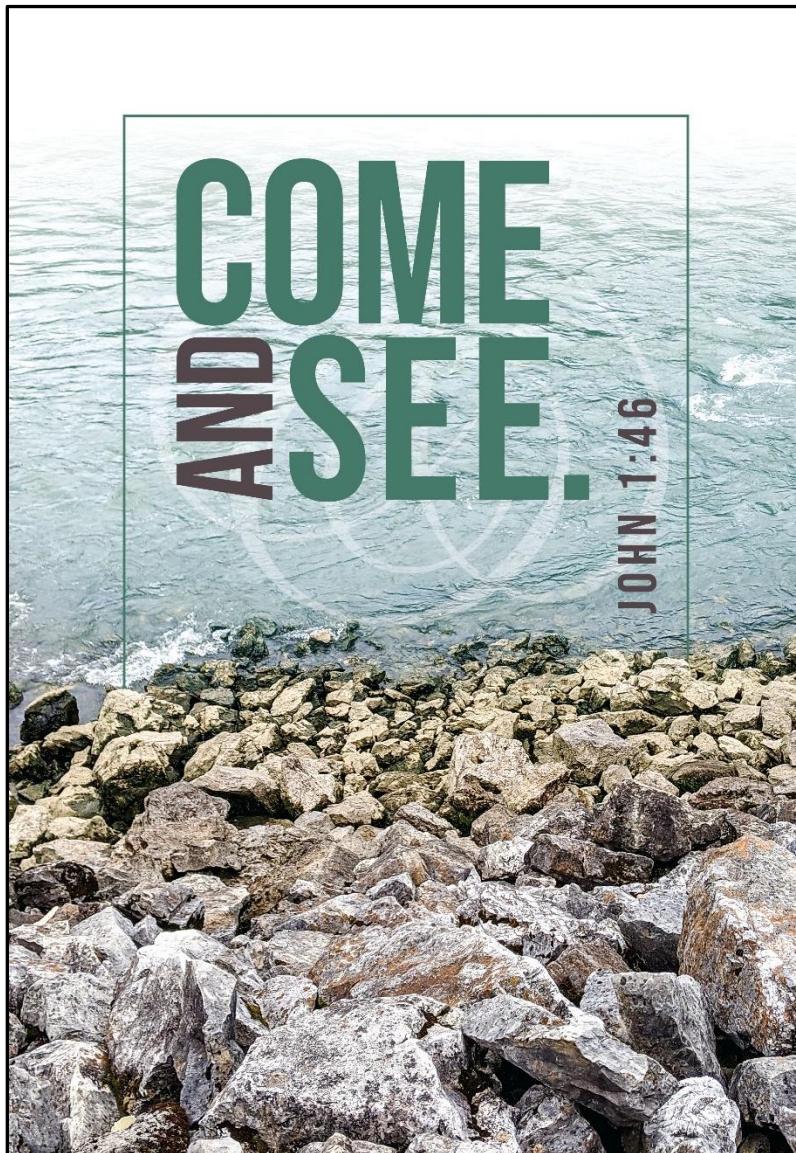


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

January 18, 2026



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

January 18, 2026

Second Sunday after Epiphany

10:00 am

Gathering

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

- Martin Luther King Jr.

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: God knows each of us by name.
P: **We are somebody.**
L: God loves us whether we are young or old.
P: **We are somebody.**
L: God cares for us whether we are short or tall, rich or poor.
P: **We are somebody.**
L: God accepts us as we are.
P: **We are somebody.**
L: God calls us to be more than we are.
P: **We are somebody.**
L: To be a beacon of light, a chorus of praise, an oasis of love.
P: **We are somebody.**
All: **Come let us worship the God who leads us into abundant life!**

***HYMN**

Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

Black #459

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Jesus calls us to come and follow him.

P: **Forgive us when we are distracted.**

L: Jesus calls us to be ambassadors of peace.

P: **Forgive us when we strike out in anger.**

L: Jesus calls us to be agents of God's love.

P: **Forgive us when we live out of fear.**

L: Jesus calls us to reach out with the good news of the gospel.

P: **Forgive us when we are too timid.**

All: **Gracious God, help us to be more Christ-like in our discipleship walk. In the face of hate, fear and worry, work in us your gifts of love, grace and peace. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Our God is slow to anger and quick to forgive.

P: **Let us hear the good news and receive it with joy;**

All: **In Jesus Christ we receive pardon from sin and freedom to live as God's new creations here and now.**

L: This is good news!

All: **Thanks be to God!**

L: May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

P: **And also with you.**

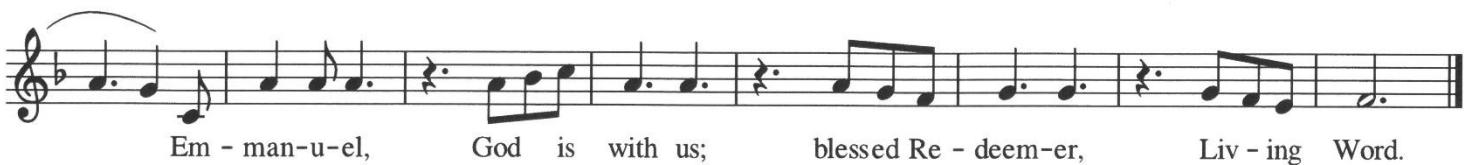
*PASSING OF THE PEACE

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

*GLORIA (Sung twice)



Je - sus, name a-bove all names; beauti-ful Sav - ior, glo-ri-ous Lord.



Em - man-u-el, God is with us; blessed Re - deem-er, Liv - ing Word.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

PSALM 40:1-8 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



God, your mer-cy is up - on us as we place our trust in you.

L: I waited patiently for the LORD; God inclined to me and heard my cry.

P: **God drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.**

L: God put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

P: **Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.**

L: Happy are those who make the LORD their trust, who do not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods.

P: **You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts towards us; none can compare with you.**

L: Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be counted.

P: **Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear.**

L: Burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required.

P: **Then I said, 'Here I am; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'** **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 people of God, let us sing!

P: **Let us sing for we are God's people and God has done wonderful things.**

L: Let us come into God's presence with joy and thanksgiving.

P: **Let us come into God's presence and let God feed us on the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing. Come Holy Spirit, come!**

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:

Here I Am, Lord
Blue #559

Taste and See

Congregation join on refrain:

Taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord.
O taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.

Breathe on Me, Breath of God
Blue #461

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.*

GOSPEL LESSON

John 1:29-42

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

You Are Salt for the Earth, O People

Black #181

*STATEMENT OF FAITH – African Creed

We believe in the one High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. God created the human person for happiness in the world. God loves the world and every nation and tribe on the earth. We have known this High God in the darkness, and now we know God in the light.

God promised in the Scriptures to save the world and all the nations and tribes. We believe that God kept all promises by sending Jesus Christ, a person in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left his home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and humankind, showing that the meaning of religion is love. Jesus was rejected by his people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross, and died. He lay buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch him, and on the third day, he rose from the grave.

We believe that all our sins are forgiven by God. We accept the gift of baptism and in the community of faith we live in ways of love and share the bread of life. We announce the good news to all people so long as God gives us breath. We believe that the Spirit is in the world and that God cares for us in life and in death. This we believe. 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.

MISSION MOMENT – Simpson Shelter and Grace Place

Carole Mottaz

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

Westminster Chimes

Jubilee Ringers

Arr. by Wagner

*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 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

Bountiful God, we come with our offerings in response to your love. With the new life of Christ, we give ourselves in service to you and our neighbors. And with energy bestowed by the Holy Spirit, we seek to be your servant people. Receive our gifts and bless us as we seek to follow. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore

Black #173

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Alan Tuchtenhagen
Deacons: Paul Shepherd, Liz Swank,
Lance Lueck, Becky Pajac,
Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Terry Mithun
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Susan Hagen
Trustee: Vicki Sippel
Coffee
Fellowship: The Luedtke Family
Counters: Trish Graves, Dennis Linder

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	<u>\$ 549,379.68</u>
2025 Net Income	<u>\$ 7,942.58</u>

Jan 11, 2026

General Fund Income*	<u>\$ 40,096.22</u>
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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), 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 our church leaders who guide us, may we faithfully celebrate our 2025 accomplishments and courageously plan for 2026
- 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 Bell Choir and their director Jamie as they share their music and talents in worship this Sunday, thank you for offering your gifts
- For our Merry Widows group mourning the recent death of JoAnn Lentz who founded this group, may you grieve in faith and gratitude
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

Prayers for our World:

- 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, Gaza 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 presentations for the 2025 Annual Meeting on February 1, may you deftly and joyfully summarize your accomplishments
- For our Trustees and their helpers cleaning the church on Saturday, Jan 31, thank you!
- For our mid-winter experiment of Pizza and Salad for our Wednesday Night Meals—let's eat together
- For our church secretary Missy Luedtke compiling the Annual Report and keeping us all on track, bless 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 Winelle, mother of Jill Paulson who died this past week
- 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.

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!

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 discussing Matthew Skinner's *Acts: Catching Up with the Spirit*. Copies of the book are available in the church office for \$16.00 each. The group meets in the library on **Wednesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

Upcoming: Ash Wednesday and Evening Lenten Worship: Ash Wednesday worship will be on Wednesday, February 18, 6:30–7:30 pm in the sanctuary. Throughout Lent, we will gather together on Wednesday evenings for simple Prayer Around the Cross services. Wednesday Evening Worship will be on Wednesdays February 25, March 4, 11, 18 and 25. Please plan to attend!

Loving Neighbor

Basics for Local Kids: Volunteers are needed. You can help families shop or you can help sort, restock or organize winter wear. Shifts are usually 2 hours. To sign up, 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.

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

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, Jan 21 at 1:00 pm at Table on Main in River Falls**. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

Game Day Sunday: Game Day Sunday is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next Game Days are **TODAY, January 18 and February 15 with a new time of 11:45 am**. Join us!

Creative Prayer Flow—Thurs, Feb 19, 6:30-8:00 pm: The workshop will be lead by Carrie Windett MA, ATR-BC, LPCC, Be Still Art + Healing, LLC. In this workshop, you'll explore Sensorimotor Art Therapy's guided drawing's three resourcing movements before moving into a time of watercolor play; an invitation for joy and connection. The experience will conclude with reflections on Christ-centered truths and witnessing others. No artistic experience is required - just open hands and a willing heart to try. The group will meet in the youth room. Please sign up and join us.

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 **Jan 20 & Feb 3.**

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 **Jan 27 & Feb 10.**

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

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.

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 First Congregational at 6:30pm. The WISE Team meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30pm. For info, call Marg Downing at 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Pizza Party: Until our full Wednesday Night Family Meals resume on Ash Wednesday, Feb 18, we will hold a Pizza Party on Wednesday night from 5:15 to 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. This week our pizza will come from Steve's Pizza here in River Falls. Salad, fruit & drinks will also be served. When you sign up, suggest pizza toppings & we will do our best to accommodate. Normal pricing of \$9 per person/family max of \$30. Join us!

Church Clean Up Inside: The Trustees need your help cleaning up inside the church on **Sat, Jan 31 at 9:00 am.** Cleaning supplies will be provided. Church Interns receive double hours for helping out. Please sign up.

Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of the congregation will be **Sunday, February 1** in the Fellowship Hall starting at about 11:15 am. In addition to receiving reports, passing budgets and electing officers, we will also hear ministry updates from many of our teams and committees. Please sign up and join us!

Tiny Home Summit: Every night in River Falls, there are people who experience homelessness. You are invited to join seven River Falls churches (including First Congregational) in cooperation with Our Neighbors' Place to learn about a project to build Tiny Homes to help lessen homelessness in our community. Pastor Chris will be a presenter. Please come! The Tiny Home Summit will be **Thurs, Jan 29 at 6:00 pm** at Luther Memorial Church. Go to Facebook page for more info: <https://www.facebook.com/share/17wJu6tCtk/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

Radical Imagination for Climate Hopeful Futures – Thurs, Jan 29, 6:30-8:00 pm: This presentation will feature Lil Milagro Henriquez, Founder and Executive Director of the Mycelium Youth Network, as she shares how we can build climate-resilient, hopeful futures grounded in scientific truth. This event is part of the Sustainability Speakers Series. The presentation is virtual only so Hope for Earth is planning a Watch Party to bring people together! You can watch the presentation live through the River Falls Public Library Facebook and YouTube pages, or you can join Hope for Earth for the in-person watch party at Junior's Restaurant with free appetizers and beverage ticket. RSVP for in-person watch party required. Please see the flyer for more info.

Name Tags: We encourage you to wear your name tags so that everyone 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.



Join our 20th Anniversary Ecumenical Fundraising Concert for a memorable night of music supporting vital projects in Ganthier, Haiti.

It Takes a Village

Sunday, February 22 at 4:00 pm

Ezekiel Lutheran Church

202 South 2nd St. | River Falls, WI

A free-will offering will be collected to support the school, orphanage, and health center—bringing hope and lasting impact.

A dessert reception will follow the concert.



Featuring: Croix Chordsmen Chorus, Cross Lutheran Choir (Roberts), Ezekiel's Chancel Choir, First Congregational Church Choir, Pierce County Ecumenical, UWRF-University Community Chorus, and a mass choir number

Learn more about this nonprofit at HaitianRelief.org

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 1:29-42

The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, ‘Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, “After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.” I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.’ And John testified, ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.’

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, ‘Look, here is the Lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him, ‘Rabbi’ (which translated means Teacher), ‘where are you staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas’ (which is translated Peter).