

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

February 1, 2026



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

February 1, 2026

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

10:00 am

Gathering

“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.” - Desmond Tutu

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: Jesus came to teach people about God's ways.

P: **Come Jesus, and teach us this day.**

L: He taught a new way of looking at the world and ourselves.

P: **Come Jesus, and teach us this day.**

L: He taught us that it is better to give than receive.

P: **Come Jesus, and teach us this day.**

L: He taught us that we are to be peacemakers.

P: **Come Jesus, and teach us this day.**

L: And he taught us that we should offer mercy and compassion.

P: **Come Jesus, and teach us this day.**

L: Let us learn from Jesus and, by the Spirit's power, be his body for the world.

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

***HYMN**

God of Grace and God of Glory

Blue #569

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Merciful God, you know that we talk much about peace, but at the same time make much trouble for ourselves and for each other.

P: **We quarrel – at home and school, work and play, even at church. We let loyalties to things and ideas surpass our loyalty to you our God.**

L: Sometimes we even hide from the costs and joys of discipleship. God, forgive us in your mercy.

P: **Embrace us with your reconciliation and peace.**

All: **Fill us with a purposeful light that shines forth into all the world. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Friends, "God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

P: **As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is God's steadfast love for us.**

L: As far as the east is from the west,

P: **So far God removes our transgressions from us.**

L: In Jesus 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 (Sung twice)

Amen

(Led by the Choir)

Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen

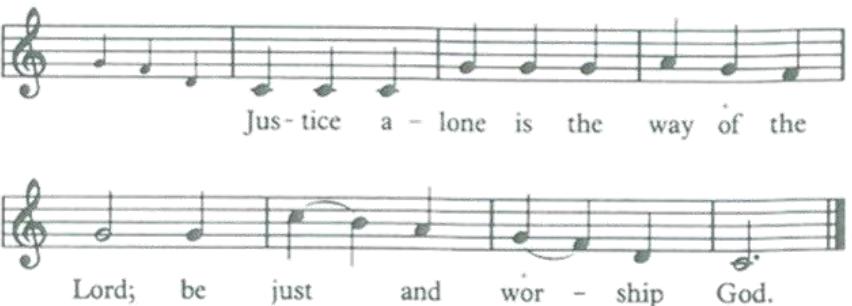
Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Micah 6:1-8

PSALM 15 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



Jus-tice a - lone is the way of the
Lord; be just and wor - ship God.

L: O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?

P: **Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart;**

L: Who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;

P: **In whose eyes the wicked are despised, but who honor those who fear the LORD; who stand by their oath even to their hurt;**

L: Who do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent.

P: **Those who do these things shall never be moved. 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: Today we gather at the table of the Lord where ordinary gifts of bread and wine are shared, where a vision for a new heaven and a new earth shine forth for all to see. We come to be filled where once we were hungry.

P: **We come to have our thirst quenched where once we were parched.**

L: We come to find peace in a broken world.

All: **We come and gather around the table so that together we may become God's faithful followers.**

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:

Blest Are They

Congregation joins on refrain.

Refrain

All C D7 G D Em G C G

Re - joice and be glad! Bless-ed are you;

ho - ly are you! Re - joice and be glad!

Yours is the king-dom of God!

Will You Let Me Be Your Servant

Blue #391

I Am Sure I Shall See

Ostinato Refrain



I am sure I shall see the good-ness of the Lord in the land of the liv - ing. Yes, I shall see the good-ness of our God. Hold firm, trust in the Lord.

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.*

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 5:1-12

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

*HYMN

For the Healing of the Nations

Blue #621

*STATEMENT OF FAITH – United Church of Christ

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. 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

Everywhere You

Chancel Choir

Arr. by Debra Scroggins

*OFFERTORY

We Praise You, O God

Blue #726

*We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.
We lay it before you, we kneel and adore you;
We bless your holy name, glad praises we sing.*

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Loving God, we give you heartfelt thanks for all your abundant blessings in our lives. We thank you for this community of faith, a home for us on our journey to be your people. We thank you for every opportunity you provide us to share our gifts, our lives with you and to build up the community of the people of God throughout the earth. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

We Are Called

Verses



1. Come! Live in the light!
2. Come! O - pen your heart!
3. Sing! Sing a new song!



Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord! We are
Show your mer - cy to all those in fear! We are
Sing of that great day when all will be one! God will



called to be light for the king - dom, to
called to be hope for the hope - less so all
reign, and we'll walk with each oth - er as



live in the free - dom of the cit - y of God!
ha - tred and blind-ness will be no more!
sis - ters and broth-ers u - ni - ted in love!

Refrain



We are called to act with jus - tice, we are called to



love ten - der - ly, we are called to serve one an - oth - er;



to walk hum - bly with God!

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Steve Koecher
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Becky Pajac,
Liz Swank, Melissa Oscanyan,
Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Steve Koecher
Coffee
Fellowship: Church Council
Counters: Jean Smith, Scott Nelson

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 25, 2026

General Fund Income*	<u>\$ 72,849.67</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), Emily Rognholt (sister of Missy Linaberry), Blake Friese, Barb Mahoney, Joyce Kampstra, Jim Larson

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 choir and other local choirs gearing up for the It Takes A Village concert on Sunday, February 22nd at 4pm at Ezekiel, may your voices bring hope and healing to the folks in Haiti (proceeds from the concert go to the village in Haiti sponsored by the churches of River Falls)
- For housing insecure folks in our community and those who met on Thursdays to plan a Tiny Home community, may you be innovative and courageous in your planning
- For our Back Bay Mission Team headed to Biloxi, MS over Spring Break, may you be the light of Jesus as you work there
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

Prayers for our World:

- As we gather for the Winter Olympics, may we remember the common bonds that bind us together
- For those in our church and community living in fear with recent immigration raids
- For people who work and live outside as we live through (hopefully) the coldest week of the year
- For those in treatment and rehab, may you be given strength for the journey
- 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 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 custodian Troy Zakrewski trying valiantly to keep our church floors clean from all the snow and ice melt, stay strong and 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 Viola, grandmother of Sarah Plum, who died this past week, may God strengthen you
- For the family of Dick Taylor, brother of Yvonne Benson who died recently, may you mourn with gratitude
- For the families of Jane Webb (Greenwood Teacher), Cody Peterson (RF Fire Department), Wanell Hansen (mother of Jill Paulson), JoAnn Lentz and Jim Filkins, may they be comforted

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

First Church Companions: We are working to reinvigorate our visits to church members. Are you interested in being a companion to someone in our church connecting with them at least once a month with a call or visit? Or would you like to have someone for a companion. Please use the sign-up sheet to be a companion or request someone to visit you.

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.

Grace Place is a homeless shelter run by the Salvation Army in New Richmond. It is housed in the old St. Croix County Nursing Home. They operate on a short shoe-string budget and are delighted that we will support them with donations and meals. The shelter has three family rooms, a men's wing and a women's wing. They can house up to 50 people, two or three people to a room. If you have any questions, please see Carole Mottaz.

Grace Place Donations: Needed items: New adult undergarments (underwear up to size XXL), new bras, thermal underwear (up to size XXL), new or like-new sweatpants up to size 4X, new or like-new T-shirts up to size 4X, new shoes (adult men and female), belts, adult socks, new or like-new winter coats, adult gloves, good buys. There is a bin at 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

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 & join us.

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Friday, February 20, at 1:00 pm at The Sycamore in River Falls.** They will have pizza and dessert for lunch. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

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 **Feb 3 & 17.**

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 **Feb 10 & 24.**

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.

Game Day Sunday: Game Day Sunday is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next Game Day is **February 15 with a new time of 11:45 am.** Join us!

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

Annual Meeting: The Annual Meeting of the congregation is **TODAY** 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 join us!

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. 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 Family Fused Glass Project: During Lent, members of our church family are invited to work together to create a large fused glass piece of art that will hang by the main stairwell. The theme of the piece will be Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Artists will learn to cut and arrange glass pieces to create the design. Once the art is complete, it will be fused in a glass kiln and then hung on the wall. Please watch for workshop times.

Relay for Life Soup Night: Once again the Relay for Life team will have its annual Soup Night to raise money for Relay for Life. Our **Soup Night is March 18 from 5:15-6:00 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. The cost of the meal is a donation of \$9/person or \$30/family as with other Wednesday night meals. There will be a variety of soups, some fruit, & dessert. You can sample/eat as many of the soups as you like. The **Relay for Life Event is Fri, April 10** beginning at 5:00 pm at the River Falls High School gym. The theme this year is "We are the World, United for a Cure." It will have many opportunities to participate in the event with teams selling items, selling luminaries, and the silent auction. Please plan to participate or help our church's team raise money for the fundraiser. If you have questions or would like to join our team, contact Deb Hoffman at debhoffman234b@gmail.com or (612)308-4945.

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.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Micah 6:1-8

Hear what the LORD says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel.

‘O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.’

‘With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?’ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.