

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

March 29, 2026



Palm Sunday

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

March 29, 2026

Palm Sunday

10:00 am

Gathering

The love of power has ruled the world since the beginning of time. Only one force is strong enough to overcome it in our day: it is the power of love. Holy Week forces us to choose which kind of King or Leader we will follow. The love of Power. Or the power of Love.

The Rev. George MacLeod, Scottish Pastor

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: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

P: Hosanna in the highest!

L: Blessed is God's only Son who takes away the sin of the world.

P: Hosanna in the highest!

L: Blessed is the Prince of Peace who reconciles all humanity to God.

P: Hosanna in the highest!

L: Blessed is Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, Lord and King.

P: Hosanna in the highest!

L: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

P: Hosanna in the highest!

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

PROCESSIONAL GOSPEL READING

Matthew 21:1-11

***HYMN**

All Glory, Laud and Honor
Verses 1, 3, 4, and 5

Blue #265

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Lord, it is the beginning of a Holy Week of great adventure and sacrifice.

P: **We sense our need for you.**

L: You ask us to read your Word.

P: **We start by reading the Bible, but then get busy and put it aside.**

L: You ask us to pray.

P: **We begin to pray to you and then we are interrupted again.**

L: Lord, speak to us through your Word.

P: **Let it penetrate our hearts and minds.**

L: Speak to us and let us hear your call.

P: **Guide us during this Holy Week so we may not just understand Jesus' life, death and resurrection but see ourselves involved in it. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: We already know the ending to this story.

P: **Though we participate in Christ's betrayal, our salvation is sure because God raised Jesus from the dead.**

L: Hear and believe this incredible good news:

P: **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

Prepare the Way of the Lord

(Sung twice in a round, follow the leader!)

I II
Pre - pare the way of the Lord. Pre - pare the way of the Lord,

III IV
and all peo-ple will see the sal - va - tion of our God. Pre -

Hearing the Word

PSALM 31:9-16 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's holy name.*

Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me into life.

L: Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also.

P: For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away.

L: I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me.

P: I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel.

L: For I hear the whispering of many—terror all around!—as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

P: But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my God.'

L: My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.

P: Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love. 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: Jesus said: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." So come, sisters and brothers, just as you are. Let him feed you, so that you can go to feed others. Let him love you, so we can go to love others. Let him bind us together into his body, so that together we may become Christ's body at work in the world today.

P: Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!

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:

Let Us Be Bread

Congregation join on refrain:



Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord, bro-ken and shared,



life for the world. Let us be wine, love free-ly poured.



Let us be one in the Lord.

A Place at the Table

Blue #617

You Are My All in All

Blue #427

Nothing Can Trouble

Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.

Those who seek God shall never go wanting.

God alone fills us.

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.***

***STATEMENT OF FAITH (World Council of Churches)**

I believe in the living God, the Maker of all humankind who creates and sustains the universe in power and in love.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God incarnate on earth, who showed us by his words and work, suffering with others, conquest of death, what human life ought to be and what God is like.

I believe that the Spirit of God is present with us now and always, and can be experienced in prayer, in forgiveness, in the Word, the Sacraments, the community of the Church and all that we do. 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 – Chancel Choir

Blessed Is He Who Comes

Arr. by Pepper Choplin



***OFFERTORY**



We give thee but thine own, what - e'er the gift may be; all that we have is



thine a - lone a trust, O Lord, from thee.

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Gracious God, our gifts can never match your goodness toward us. Your saving grace and healing touch are far beyond our imaginations. So we offer ourselves in response to the coming of your Son Jesus Christ. Hosanna in the highest. Receive, O God, our humble service. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

Ride On, Ride On in Majesty!

Blue #268

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Reprinted music used by permission under the following licenses:
OneLicense.net A-703731; CCLI License 2892021

Back Bay Mission Trip



SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chirs Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Ginny Larson
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Traci Hagberg,
Liz Swank, Karen Lloyd,
Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Deb Hoffman
Trustee: Vicki Sippel
Coffee
Fellowship: Melissa and Tom Oscanyan
Counters: Jane Truesdill, 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

	<u>Mar 22, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,311	\$ 138,867
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 135,696

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'

**Join us for
Holy Week Worship**

Palm Sunday	Mar 29 10:00 am
Maundy Thursday	April 2 6:30 pm
Good Friday Cantata	April 3 6:30 pm
Easter Sunday	April 5 9:00 & 10:30 am
Easter Breakfast	April 5 8:00-10:15 am

All Are Welcome!

First Congregational Church
110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI

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), Jim Larson, KayLee (friend of Barb Stephens), Lynn Merriman, Dave Ostendorf

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our Back Bay Mission Team back after a loooong journey home, thank you for your work!
- For our pastors, choir and musicians gearing up for Palm Sunday and Holy Week, may we come together to worship and pray
- For our Among Friends program for those with dementia that they, may receive more funding and volunteers
- For those preparing for EarthFest on Saturday, April 25th at UWRF, may we be better stewards of the gift of our earth
- For our teens and young people serving the Easter Breakfast and Chef Andy and his crew cooking, may all be fed and Easter joy increased – join us and sign up!
- For housing insecure folks in our community and those planning for Wellspring, a community of Tiny Homes to meet housing insecurity needs in our community, may God grace them with vision and courage
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she continues dialysis

Prayers for our World:

- For the people across the Middle East coping with war, may a lasting peace soon come
- For those in our armed forces and their families, may we support them and may God watch over them
- For TSA workers faithfully doing their job without pay, may they be paid and this never happen again
- 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 the love and joy of Holy Week and Easter
- For the \$25,000 given by church folks to help refugees in Ukraine, you are angels
- For the recent Relay for Life Soup Supper and for their Hot Dish Night April 8th, may we be fed and cancer end
- For those who received blood from the March 16th blood drive in our Fellowship Hall, may it bring life
- For the last of our Wednesday Family Meals which this year is the Relay for Life Hot Dish Night on Wednesday, April 8th from 5:15 to 6:00 pm, may all be fed

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Loral Keil, wife of Brian Miller, and one of our deacons, whose Memorial Service will be at Bakken and Young on Easter Saturday, April 4th at 11am with visitation an hour before and a lunch afterward, may her family be comforted
- For the families of Terry Smith (sister of Tom Smith), Ronald Gandrud (father of Cindy)

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!

Holy Week and Easter: Holy Week is the most important week for Christian people. It shows the depth and breadth of God's love. Challenge yourself to join us for all of the Holy Week services this year.

Palm Sunday, March 29 Sunday Worship and Procession of Palms at 10:00 am

Maundy Thursday, April 2 Worship at 6:30 pm

Good Friday, April 3 Choir presents their Good Friday Cantata at 6:30 pm

Holy Saturday, April 4 Youth set tables and prepare for the Easter Breakfast at 10:00 am

Easter Sunday, April 5 Worship at 9:00 and 10:30 am with Breakfast served from 8:00 to 10:15 am

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 book of Ruth. The group meets in the Fireplace Room on **Wednesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. To receive a copy of the study book or if you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

One Great Hour of Sharing is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ within the Wider Church Ministries. We need to support this ministry, maybe now more than ever. Envelopes are in the pews and on the sign-up table. Thank you for your generous support. - Mission Education Committee

First Church Companions: 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: There is a bin for donations. Volunteers are also needed. You can help families shop or you can help sort, restock or organize. Shifts are 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: shampoo – large or travel size, conditioner – large or travel size, body wash – large or travel size, body lotion – large or travel size, new or like-new wash cloths, new or like-new bath towels, new or like-new hand towels, new or like-new twin and full sheets, new or like-new twin and full size blankets, new pillows, 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

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wednesday, April 15 at 1:00 pm at Mariachi Loco** in River Falls. 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 **Mar 31 & Apr 14**.

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 **Apr 14 & 28**.

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 **April 19 at 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

Join us for Easter Breakfast – Sunday, April 5: Easter Breakfast will be served from **8:00 am to 10:15 am**. Cost is \$10 per person with a family max of \$40, all of which goes to our Youth Fund for mission trips and opportunities. Please sign up by Wednesday, April 1. Sign up at church or online.

Relay for Life: The **Hot Dish Meal**, a fundraiser for Relay for Life, is **Wed, April 8 from 5:15-6:00 pm**. We will have a variety of hot dishes to taste and enjoy. We will also serve salad, dessert & side dishes. The suggested cost is \$9/meal or a donation to Relay for Life. We will have luminaries available "in honor of" or "in memory of" a special person at the meal and the next two Sundays. The cost of the luminaries is \$5/bag. Our team is also looking for some silent auction items/ideas. Please share ideas with a team member or Deb Hoffman.

The **Relay for Life Event is on Friday, 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 at the event with teams selling items, selling luminaries, spaghetti dinner, and the silent auction. The luminary service is at 8:30 pm and the Relay Event is completed at 9:30 pm. If you have questions or would like to help with the meal, contact Deb Hoffman at debhoffman234b@gmail.com or (612)308-4945

Endowment Grants: Each quarter the Endowment Grant Committee meets to evaluate proposals for new ministries and projects submitted through our church committees. Does your group have a new idea you want to pursue? Is there a need in the church or community your group wants to address? Consider applying for an Endowment Grant! All proposals must come from a committee, and the next due date is **April 5**. Forms can be accessed through the church office or on the church website.

Spring Clean-Up, Saturday, April 25, 9:00 am: Please bring your gloves, rakes, blowers, pruning shears, etc. to help clean up the grounds at the church. Please sign up and join us!

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.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 21:1-11

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

'Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Philippians 2:5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.