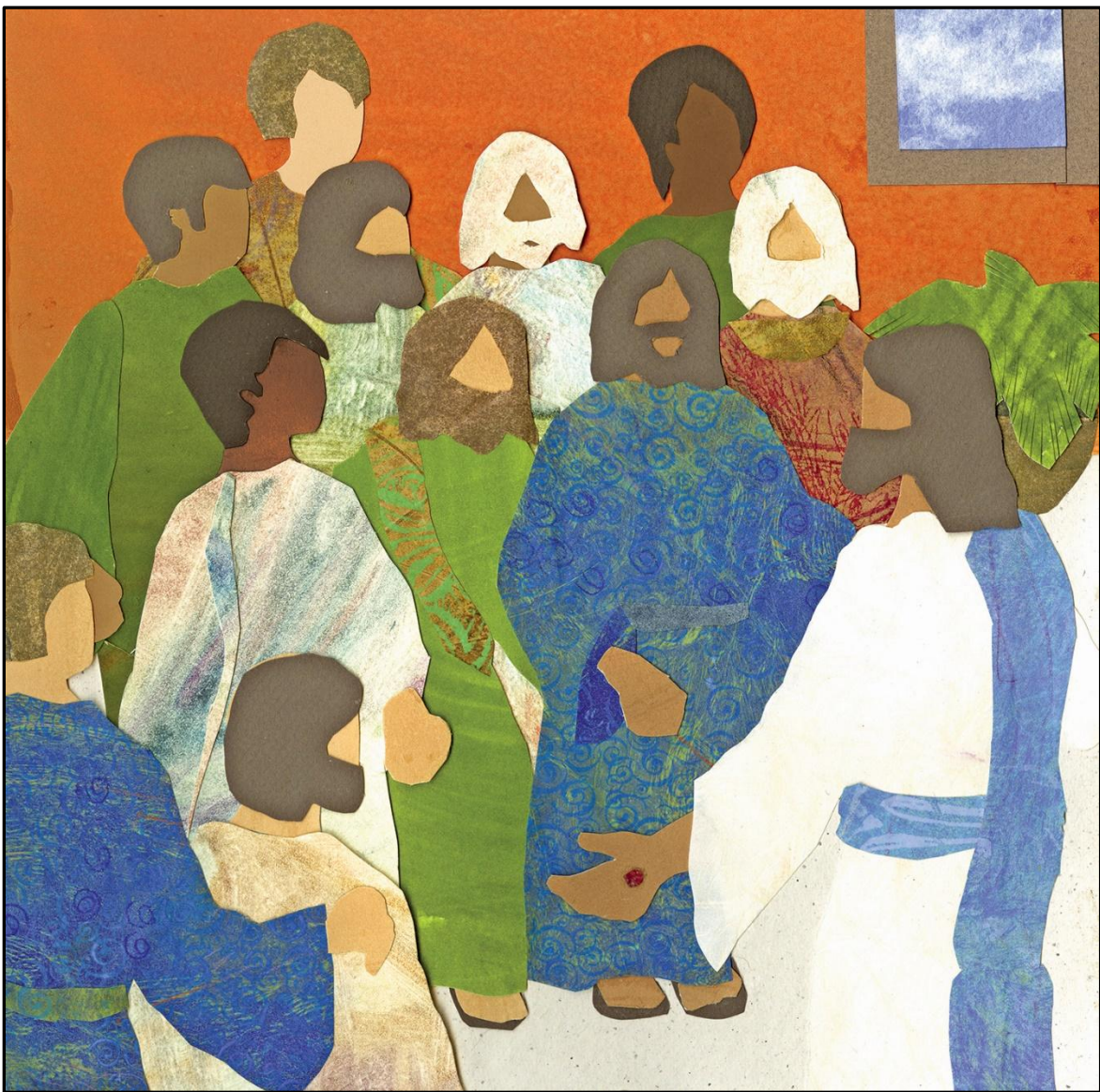


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

April 12, 2026



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

April 12, 2026

Second Sunday of Easter

10:00 am

Gathering

When author Madeleine L'Engle was asked, "Do you believe in God without any doubts?" she replied, "I believe in God with all my doubts."

- Bruce Epperly, 21st century

Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is one element of faith.

- Paul Tillich, 20th century

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: Christ is risen!

P: Christ is risen indeed!

L: Death and the ways of death have been defeated.

P: Hope is vindicated.

L: Love has triumphed.

P: Let us rejoice, for Christ our Lord is risen!

***HYMN**

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

Blue #295

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Lord God, you made the hearts of the disciples glad in the resurrection of Jesus, your Son. Forgive us when, like them, we find the truth of Easter so hard to believe; forgive us when we are so easily downcast, and given to despair; forgive us when, although we claim to live by the resurrection faith, we so often appear to believe that suffering is simply a tragedy and that death is the end; forgive us when we take so much convincing of the hope that you give to the world.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

P: **Thanks be to God.**

L: Come to us, Lord God, in the power of the risen Christ.

P: **Take away our crippling doubts and fears.**

L: Open our eyes to see you standing before us, calling us to a life of faith.

P: **Through your Holy Spirit lead us on a path of service.**

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

Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia!
Al-le - lu - ia! Give the glo-ry
1 and the hon-or to the Lord!
2 and the hon-or to the Lord!

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

1 Peter 1:3-9

PSALM 16 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

Response
E♭ Unison Gm A♭M7 B♭ E♭
Stead - fast love sur - rounds those who trust in God.
Antiphon: Emma Lou Diemer, 1994

L: Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

P: **I say to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.'**

- L: As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight.
- P: Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink-offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.**
- L: The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.
- P: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage. R**
- L: I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.
- P: I keep the LORD always before me; because God is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.**
- L: Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.
- P: For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.**
- L: You show me the path of life.
- P: In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore. 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: Beloved in Christ, the gospel tells that after that first Easter when the disciples were gathered together in fear, the Risen Christ came and stood among them and he said to them:
- P: "Peace be with you."**
- L: Here at this table, the Risen Christ comes again offering us his gift of peace.
- P: May the peace of Christ be with us. Alleluia!**

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 Talents and Tongues Employ

Blue #698

I Come with Joy

Blue #706

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Blue #461

In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful

***In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice!
Look to God, do not be afraid; lift up your voices, the Lord is near;
lift up your voices, the Lord is near.***

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.)

***This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.***

GOSPEL LESSON

John 20:19-31

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

We Live by Faith and Not by Sight

Black #256

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH FOR EASTER**

We believe in the God of Resurrection,

Who lights the dawn to chase away the darkness;

Who rolls away each stone of doubt;

Who surprises us with incredible gifts of family and friends, silence and laughter;

Who raises us from sadness and despair to the possibilities of blessing and joy.

We believe in Jesus the Christ,

Friend of the poor and searcher for the lost,

Who comes to us in our grief and longing, calls us by name and sends us on the paths of peace to speak of an awesome love that is not overcome by death.

We believe in the Holy Spirit our Guide,

The hidden partner, the gentle messenger of God,

Who fills our every breath with blessing;

Who guides us in the dark, beckons us to do good, speaks to us in dream and image, and watches over us with tender compassion.

We believe in the church,

An instrument of God in this present moment, striving for justice, celebrating in joy, clawing at despair, living in hope, praying for healing and forever proclaiming the Good News of God's persistent and redeeming love. Amen.

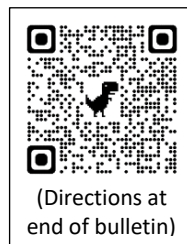
THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

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

Speak, O Lord



***DOXOLOGY**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Praise God: Christ our Lord is Risen. Breathe new life into each of us and into your church. May the gifts we give be a sign of our love, devotion, and commitment to your will. We pray in the name of our risen Lord. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

Christ Is Alive

Blue #312

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Jean Smith
Deacons: Ann Nelson, Melissa Oscanyan,
Heidi Cavaness, Karen Lloyd
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Steve Koecher
Coffee
Fellowship: Jean Smith
Counters: Marie Roe, Scott Nelson
*Altar table flowers are given by Marsha
Pearson in memory of Maynard Pearson.*

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>Apr 5, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 4,154	\$ 145,575
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 158,312

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'
-

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, Galen (brother of Sue Danielson)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those preparing for Earth Fest on Sat, April 25th at UWRF, may we all be better stewards of the gift of God's good creation
- For our confirmands as we approach Confirmation Sunday on Sunday, May 3rd, may they grow in love and faith
- For the 200+ churches of the Wisconsin Conference UCC as they gather for their Annual Meeting in Green Lake, WI this weekend and for our delegates Pastors Chris and Stacy and Carol Merriman as they gather around the theme of cultivating community
- For our fabulous Among Friends program as it seeks more volunteers and board members
- For housing insecure folks in our community and those planning for Wellspring Village, 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 living through 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 those in treatment and rehab, may you be given strength for the journey
- For farmers, especially small family farms, struggling to stay viable with so many economic challenges
- For stability and peace in Venezuela, Iran, Gaza and Ukraine
- As we gear up for Earth Fest at UWRF on Sat, April 25th, let us creatively think of ways we can individually and collectively 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 pastors, deacons, choir and musicians who worked so hard during Holy Week and Easter, God bless you all!
- For all who made the Easter Breakfast a satisfying success, especially Chef Andy and his great team!
- For the \$25,000 given by church folks to help refugees in Ukraine, you are angels
- For those who received blood from the recent blood drive in our Fellowship Hall and for those who will donate on Wednesday, May 20th, may it bring life

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Keith Traynor (brother of Diane Welsh) who died unexpectedly this past week, may they be comforted
- For the family of Carol Cameron (sister of Joyce Kampstra) who died this past week, may her family grieve in hope
- For the families of Terry Smith (sister of Tom Smith), Ronald Gandrud (father of Cindy), Loral Keil (wife of Brian)

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 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

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: new adult undergarments (underwear up to size XXL), new bras, 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, 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 **Apr 14 & 28**.

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

Earth Fest is a free community celebration that includes food samples, entertainment, workshops, activities for all ages, and much more. Earth Fest will be held on **Saturday, April 25, from 12:00-4:00 pm at UW-River Falls University Center**. First Congregational will have a booth so stop by and see us. We are giving away Earth Balls! Check it out at www.hopeforearth.org and see the flyer for more information.

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!

Red Cross Blood Drive: Help hope bloom! Please join our **Wed, May 20th First Congregational Church Blood Drive from 11am – 5pm** and save up to 3 lives with 1 donation. One hour of your time can ensure readily available blood resources for patients in the coming weeks. All donors will get a \$20 Amazon.com e-gift card "Thank You!" via email, but the feeling you'll leave with is priceless - [Click here to sign-up today!](#)

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 **July 5**. Forms can be accessed through the church office or on the church website.

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.



SATURDAY, APRIL 25 • 12-4PM

UW-RIVER FALLS UNIVERSITY CENTER
RIVER FALLS, WI

FREE COMMUNITY EVENT! ALL ARE WELCOME!



PLAN AHEAD:

BATTERY RECYCLING

CLOTHING SWAP + MENDING STATION

WELL WATER TESTING

PRESCRIPTION TURN-IN

PARKING/ SHUTTLE INFO

- *Parking* available in UWRF lots (see map on website for details)
- *EV shuttle* between Pay Lot 1 & Earth Fest (University Center)

LOCAL & SUSTAINABLE FOOD SAMPLES

ENTERTAINMENT

- 12PM: CARPENTER NATURE CENTER RAPTOR SHOW*
- 1PM: TRASHION SHOW*
- 2PM: GREEN BUFFALO FILM SCREENING*
- 2:30PM: CREATIVELY INDIGENOUS ART*
- 3PM: CHRIS SILVER BAND*

GREEN SKILLS SAMPLER

30-MINUTE MINI CLASSES ON 3RD FLOOR (12-3PM)

ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

INDOORS & OUTDOORS - ART, SCIENCE, MORE!

80+ EXHIBITORS

GIVEAWAYS

hopeforearth.org/earthfest 

facebook.com/earthfestRF 

@earthfestRF 



SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 20:19-31 (The Message)

Later on that day, the disciples had gathered together, but, fearful of the Jews, had locked all the doors in the house. Jesus entered, stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.” Then he showed them his hands and side.

The disciples, seeing the Master with their own eyes, were awestruck. Jesus repeated his greeting: “Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you.”

Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he said. “If you forgive someone’s sins, they’re gone for good. If you don’t forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?”

But Thomas, sometimes called the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, “We saw the Master.”

But he said, “Unless I see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger in the nail holes, and stick my hand in his side, I won’t believe it.”

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the room. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus came through the locked doors, stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.”

Then he focused his attention on Thomas. “Take your finger and examine my hands. Take your hand and stick it in my side. Don’t be unbelieving. Believe.”

Thomas said, “My Master! My God!”

Jesus said, “So, you believe because you’ve seen with your own eyes. Even better blessings are in store for those who believe without seeing.”

Jesus provided far more God-revealing signs than are written down in this book. These are written down so you will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in the act of believing, have real and eternal life in the way he personally revealed it.