

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

April 19, 2026



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

April 19, 2026

Third Sunday of Easter

10:00 am

Gathering

“Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.”
- William Carey

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: Rise and greet the morning.
P: Cast off your sleep and doubt.
L: Arise and meet the risen Christ
P: Who comforts our grieving hearts,
L: Who encourages our faltering steps,
P: Who graces us with laughter,
L: Who gifts us with compassion,
P: Who raises us up to heaven.
All: Come let us worship!

***HYMN**

Lift High the Cross

Blue #287

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

- L: Resurrected Christ, you come to us when we least expect, offering us lives of a different kind of abundance.
P: Yet we often fail to sense your presence with us and misuse your generous gifts.
L: Joyful Spirit, you long to turn our mourning into dancing, to change our funeral clothes into garments of exuberance.

P: Yet we often fail to sense your presence with us and misuse your generous gifts.
L: Bountiful God, you fill our world with more beauty than we can count.
P: Yet we often fail to sense your presence with us and misuse your generous gifts.
All: Forgive us, Creator of all, for failing to live in tune with your love. Make us once again into your faithful people, inspired and inspiring others. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Christ forgives the most impossible sins, overcomes the greatest fears, comforts the loudest cries, and breaks down the strongest barriers to his love and peace.
P: Through the resurrection, Christ's power in the Holy Spirit lives and works here and now.
L: Brothers and sisters, know that we are forgiven and be at peace.
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* **Blue #316**

Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia,
 I will praise him, Al - le - lu - ia, I will praise him, Al - le - lu - ia,
 Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia!
 I will praise him, Al - le - lu - ia, I will praise him, Al - le - lu - ia!

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON **Acts 2:14a, 36-41**

PSALM 116:1-4, 12-19 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!
 I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.*

L: I love God, because God has heard my voice and my supplications.
P: Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on God as long as I live.

- L: The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.
- P: Then I called on the name of the LORD: 'O LORD, I pray, save my life!' R**
- L: What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?
- P: I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD, I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all God's people.**
- L: Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones.
- P: O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving-maid. R**
- L: You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.
- P: I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD! 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 gospels tell us the risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and he said them:
- P: 'Peace be with you.'**
- L: Then they were glad when they saw the Lord.
- P: Here at this table, the Risen Christ comes again offering us his gift of peace. May the peace of Christ be with us all as we eat again at his table. 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:

In the Bulb There is a Flower

Blue #515

Alleluia, Alleluia! Hearts to Heaven

Blue #289

Goodness is Stronger than Evil

Blue #296

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

Luke 24:13-35

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

This Joyful Eastertide

Blue #308

***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.

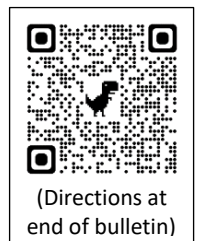
...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

MISSION MOMENT – Earth Fest – Mike Noreen

GATHERING OUR GIFTS – Jubilee Ringers

If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee

Arr. by Clisham



***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**

Praise God, Christ our Lord is risen. May he come breathing new life into each of us and our church. May the giving of our gifts be a sign of our love and devotion. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

Now the Green Blade Rises

Blue #311

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Rebecca Ferguson
Deacons: Becky Pajac, Lance Lueck,
Liz Swank, Paul Shepherd,
Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Terry Mithun
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Matt Bastien
Coffee
Fellowship: Mission Ed Committee
Counters: Jean Smith, 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>Apr 12, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,975	\$ 151,550
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 169,620

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), Mark Christopher, Steve and Janice Withers (father and mother of Erik Withers)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those preparing for EarthFest on Saturday, 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 Sun, May 3, may they grow in love and faith
- For the 200+ churches of the Wisconsin Conference UCC as they gathered for their Annual Meeting in Green Lake, WI last weekend and for our delegates Pastors Chris and Stacy and Carol Merriman as they gathered 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 for those who are 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 EarthFest at UWRF on Saturday, April 25, 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 at the next one on Wednesday, May 20th, may it bring life
- As we count down to three more Wednesday School sessions, we are thankful for all our helpers who are so gracious in giving their time

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Keith Traynor (brother of Diane Welsh) who died unexpectedly recently, may they be comforted
- For the family of JoAnn Lentz whose Memorial Gathering will be Saturday, May 2nd from 11am to 1pm in the Fellowship Hall, may they be comforted and gather together with gratitude
- For the family of Carol Cameron (sister of Joyce Kampstra) who died recently, may they grieve in hope
- For the families of Terry Smith (sister of Tom Smith), Ronald Gandrud (father of Cindy), and 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 Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study meets in the Fireplace Room on **Wednesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. The group will start a brief series of conversations focused on the book *What Do We Mean By God?* by Keith Ward starting on April 22. Copies of the book will be available in the church office for \$8.00. If you have questions, please 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.

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

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 28 & May 12**

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 28 & May 12**.

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 fristroe@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 Days are **TODAY, April 19 and May 17 at 11:45 am**. Join us!

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wednesday, May 20 at 1:00 pm at Jonesy's Local in Hudson** (1801 Ward Ave between Maurices and the Bowling Alley). All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

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

Gardeners wanted to help make our gardens look the best they can, so our church appears welcoming on the outside too.

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!

Fundraiser: The Sycamore is having a fundraiser for Among Friends. You can get a hanging flower basket with your in-kind donation to Among Friends (\$20 or more suggested). Place your order by Friday, May 1 by calling 715-997-3441. Please see the flyer for more information.

Relay for Life: Thank you very much for your generous donations for Relay for Life/American Cancer Society. The overwhelming support of Soup Night, Hotdish Night, and individual donations allowed our church to donate \$2,454. The community Relay for Life event has raised over \$84,000. Thank you also for all the wonderful cooks and clean-up volunteers who helped with the meals. This church amazes me with its generosity, willingness to help, and its compassion for others. Thank you again and God bless, Deb Hoffman.

Softball News: Our church will sponsor a softball team in the River Falls Church Family League. The family league is a co-ed division and prefers players to be 14 years old. The co-ed description requires teams to have three women on the field at all times. The games are played on Monday evenings at Hoffman Park and will begin the first Monday after Memorial Day and continue until the middle of August. Practices will begin the first Monday in May. There is a sign-up sheet on the table or contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman234b@gmail.com.

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.

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.

Youth Events

VBS and Summer Children's Musical: Dates for the 2026 children's summer programs are:

VBS: July 27-30, 9:00 to 11:30 am. Theme is: My Peace I Give to You

Children's Musical: August 10-13, 9:00 am to Noon. The show will be *Rock Slinger and His Greatest Hits*.

VBS is for children age 3 to completed grade 5. The musical is for children who have completed kindergarten through completed grade 6. Emma Cruciani will be the director. In case you can't quite tell, the musical will be the story of David and Goliath...told with a bit (or a lot) of humor! We will need adult and teen volunteers for VBS. Please save the dates! Registration forms are online and at church. Please invite friends and neighbors.



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 



Partnering for a Sustainable Future



SCRIPTURE LESSON: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them.

Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.