

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

April 26, 2026



"I came
that they may
have *life*,
and have it
abundantly."

John 10:10, NRSV

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

April 26, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Easter

10:00 am

Gathering

“One of the most indelible lessons of this scary time is that you can survive alone,
but you need others to flourish.”

- Chris Sharp

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: It is God who draws us here.

P: A yearning to praise,

L: That which is bigger than us.

P: A desire to give thanks,

L: For the bountiful gifts of life.

P: It is God who draws us here,

L: For comfort in a bruising world,

P: To challenge our half-hearted efforts.

L: It is God who draws us here,

P: To sing and pray, to experience the risen Christ.

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

***HYMN**

Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

Black #459

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: If we have been living more out of fear than faith,

P: Shepherd God, forgive us and grant us abundant life.

L: If we have been so focused on our little corner of the world that we fail to see God's larger world,

P: Shepherd God, forgive us and grant us abundant life.

L: If we have been so busy that we do not have the time to walk beside the still waters,

P: Shepherd God, forgive us and grant us abundant life.

L: And if we have forgotten our call to follow the One who leads us,

P: Shepherd God, forgive us and grant us abundant life. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: God sent Jesus into the world not to condemn it, but that so all God's people may have abundant life.

P: In Christ we are forgiven!

L: In him we experience this abundant life, here and now.

P: In Christ we are forgiven.

L: And through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us and our world we are set free from all that holds us back.

P: In Christ we are forgiven.

L: Let us live then as Christ's disciples, free from sin and empowered for service.

P: In Christ we are forgiven. Amen.

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

Glory, glory hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down.

Glory, glory hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down.

I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down.

I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down.

Hearing the Word

PSALM 23 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R

Shep-herd me, O God, be - yond my wants, be -
yond my fears, from death in - to life.

L: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

P: He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

L: He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

P: Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff - they comfort me.

L: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

P: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long. R

Celebrating the Meal

All Christians are welcome at the Lord's table. The bread is gluten-free. The cup is alcohol-free. Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.

The Invitation to the Meal

L: Come to the table of the Good Shepherd.

P: Come and listen to his voice as he calls you.

L: Come and see how he sets a table and invites you to join him.

P: Come and hear how even though we fail him, he is faithful with us.

All: Let us come just as we are, and join him at his table of grace.

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:

The Lord's Prayer

F C F C F Dm Bb C

1. Our Fa-ther, which art in heav-en,
2. Done on earth as it is in heav-en,
3. And for-give all our debts, hal-low-ed - a be thy
4. Lead us not in - to temp-tation,
5. Thine is the king-dom, pow-er, and glo-ry,
6. A - men, a - men, a - men,

F C F C7 F C

name. Thy king - dom come, thy will be done,
Give us this day our dai - ly bread,
As we for - give our debt - ors,
But de - liv - er us from e - vil,
For - ev - er and ev - er,
A - men, a - men, a - men, a - men,

F Bb C F Fine

hal - low - ed - a be thy name.

Such Perfect Love My Shepherd Shows

Black #248

Shall We Gather at the River

Black #597

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

John 10:1-10

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

Be Thou My Vision

Unison

1. Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
2. Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
3. Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
4. Great God of heav - en, my vic - to - ry won,

naught be all else to me, save that thou art
I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
may I reach heav - en's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!

thou my best thought by day or by night,
thou my re - deem - er, my love thou hast won,
thou and thou on - ly, first in my heart,
Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,

wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
thou in me dwell - ing, and I with thee one.
Great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
still be my vi - sion, O Ru - ler of all.

***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.

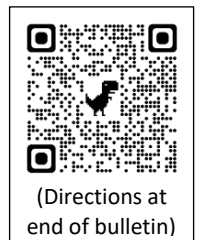
THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

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 – Calpurnia Bastien

Tchaikovsky's August: Scherzo Op. 37bis, No 8




*OFFERTORY



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

6



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

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Holy God, touch us with the power and assurance of the early disciples, as they shared and lived the Good News. Help us to share and be generous with our resources, our talents and our love. Remind us that many are hungry, many are homeless, many are lonely, without friend or fellowship. Remind us of the many in need and show us ways to help and care and serve. In our risen Lord. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Blue #440

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Sue Danielson
Deacons: Laura Anderson, Ann Nelson,
Melissa Oscanyan, Becky Pajac,
Liz Swank
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Lu Lueck
Trustee: Louie Filkins
Coffee
Fellowship: Luedtke Family – St. B’s Donuts
Counters: Diane Welsh, Vicki Sippel
*Altar table flowers are given by Lu Lueck in
appreciation for the volunteers, guests and
their families at Among Friends.*

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 19, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 3,603	\$ 170,218
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 180,928

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 Erick Withers), Sarah Plum

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our five confirmands as we approach Confirmation Sunday on Sunday, May 3rd, may they grow in love and faith
- For our Wednesday School kids as we count down to the last gathering on Wednesday, April 29 and our famous 'dirt and worms' snack!
- For our fabulous Among Friends dementia program as it welcomes its new director: Marshall Skule! May you bring your many gifts to this wonderful program and may it continue to grow and thrive
- 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 people affected by recent tornados and flooding, may helpful neighbors ease the burden
- For the people across the Middle East living through war, may a lasting peace soon come
- For victims of domestic abuse, may we do a better job protecting them
- 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, Sudan, Iran, Gaza and Ukraine
- As we celebrate Earth Day, 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 Leo Anthony Plum, born to Sarah and Alex, and big brother Anderson on Thursday, April 23rd who arrived at 19 inches and 8 pounds and 3 ounces, may he grow in wisdom and strength
- For our Wednesday School volunteers (Christina, Dave, Emma, Erin, Hazel, Jen, Mason, Rhett, Sagan) who enable this program to take place, we could not do all this without you!
- For those who received blood from the recent blood drive in our Fellowship Hall and those who will donate on Wednesday, May 20th, may it bring life
- For all those who helped cook, serve, set up and clean up from our Wednesday Night Family meals which are now over for the season - God bless you all!

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of JoAnn Lentz whose Memorial Gathering will be on Saturday, May 2nd from 11am to 1pm in the Fellowship Hall, may they be comforted and gather together with gratitude
- For the families of Keith Traynor (brother of Diane Welsh), Carol Cameron (sister of Joyce Kampstra), 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.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 10:1-10

'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.