

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

June 14, 2026



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

June 14, 2026

Third Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

I think there are a lot of broken hearts these days, broken on the left and the right over the conditions of modern life. I think the 'politics of rage' is really about heartbreak, and that if we could explore what breaks our hearts, we might find common ground.

There are at least two ways for the heart to break. There is the heart that is shattered, usually by some external event, and we are left to pick up the pieces on the way to recovery.

But there is another way to think about a broken heart, as suggested by a Sufi master, Hazrat Inayat Khan who said: God breaks the heart again and again and again until it stays open.

In the Christian tradition, we talk about the way a hardened heart is opened so that new life, resurrected life, can enter in. So that the hearts capacity for joy, for sorrow, for compassion, can be increased. - Parker Palmer

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: This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

P: Like Miriam, let us sing with gladness, for God triumphs over evil and oppression.

L: Like Hannah, let us pray with grateful hearts, for God hears our prayer.

P: Like Jacob, let us wrestle with God, for out of such struggles new faith is born.

L: Like Abraham, let us respond to God's calling, for in faith's journey we find our lives.

P: This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

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

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Creating God, in love you moved over the waters of chaos and separated sea from dry land. And yet, we cling tightly to rigid boundaries of our own making. You claim us in the waters of baptism and declare us dead to sin and alive in Christ. But too often we deny that call, conforming ourselves to the whims of culture. Transform us, we pray. Soften the unyielding edges of our hearts. Loosen our grip on “the way it’s always been” and prepare us for the joy of “the way it still can be,” through Jesus Christ. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Friends, hear this good news. Jesus Christ is our hope!

P: **His power is unequalled, his grace is unrestrained, his strength is steadfast, and his embrace is sufficient to carry all that we are and hope to be.**

L: Friends, believe and live the good news!

P: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free for service in his name.**

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)

Je - sus, name a-bove all names; beau-ti-ful Sav - ior, glo-ri-ous Lord.

Em - man-u-el, God is with us; blessed Re - deem-er, Liv - ing Word.

Hearing the Word

PSALM 100 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, give thanks and sing.*

L: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

P: **Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**

L: Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.

P: **For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. R**

| |
|-----------------------------|
| Proclaiming the Word |
|-----------------------------|

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 9:35-38

SERMON

Rev. Steve Kaehr

***HYMN**

You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore

Black #173

***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)

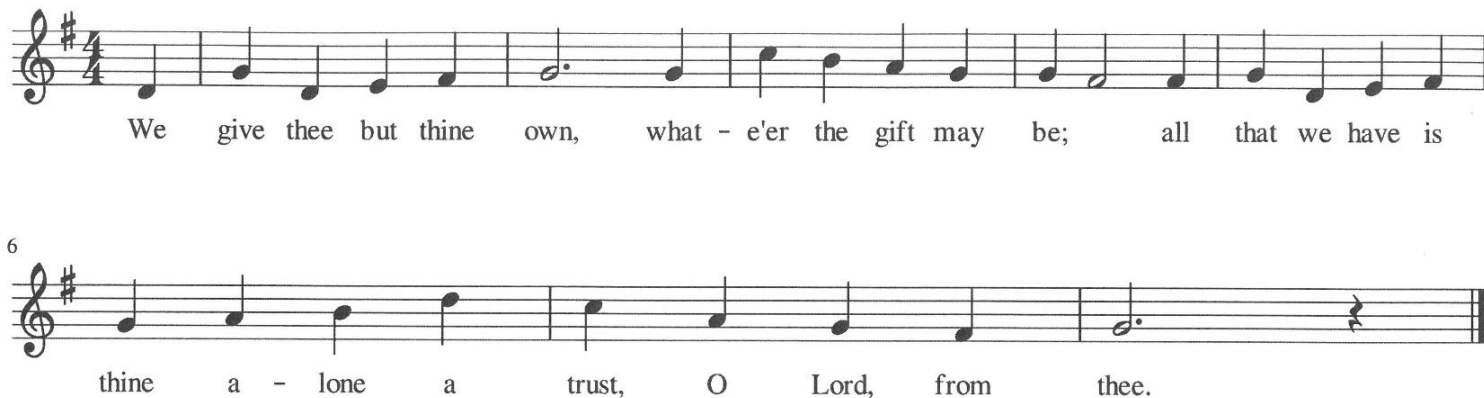
Lord in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

...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 – Deb Hoffman



*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

O Lord, may our lives reflect the praises that we sing. We have received grace upon grace, so may we live in grace with one another. We have received forgiveness, so may we forgive. We have received gifts far beyond our need, so may we give. Bless these gifts given this day and always. Amen.

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: "Follow me." Here at this table, we are reminded of our call to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ.
- P: **We follow him when we do the things he calls us to do: love and serve, bless and welcome.**
- L: We follow him when we trust he is present here at this table and will equip us with the Holy Spirit to do the things he calls us to do.
- P: **Come let us gather around his table to share the bread of life and cup of blessing.**

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:

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Blue #72

Taste and See

Congregation join on refrain:

Taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

O taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.

Shall We Gather at the River

Blue #522

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.

Sending

***HYMN**

Rejoice, Ye Pure of Heart

Blue #113

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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Our guest preacher today is the Rev. Steve Kaehr. Steve is a retired United Methodist pastor who served as pastor at Spirit of Grace Church here in River Falls and chaplain with St. Croix Hospice for 9 years. Please welcome him warmly.

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Rev. Steve Kaehr
Celebrant: Rev. Steve Kaehr
Worship
Leader: Marie Roe
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Tom Oscanyon
Deacons: Liz Swank, Brian Miller,
Melissa Oscanyon,
Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Deb Hoffman, Julie Bauer
Trustee: Mike Danielson
Coffee
Fellowship: Deb Hoffman
Counters: Jean Smith, Mark Anderson

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>June 7, 2026</u> | <u>Year to Date</u> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| General Fund Income* | \$ 3,682 | \$ 246,170 |
| General Fund Operational Needs | \$ 11,308 | \$ 260,084 |

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:

Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Eric (friend of Liz Swank), Lynn Merriman, Steve and Janice Withers (father and mother of Erik Withers), Sam Morrissette, Jeff Johnson (brother of Jenny Luedtke), Nathaniel (friend of the Kruegers), Sharon (sister of JoAnne Friedell), Bruce (father of Melissa Oscanyan), Gary Pieffer (cousin of Rose Rude)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our Music Team gearing up for the River Falls Days Bluegrass Concert on Thursday, July 9th from 6-8 pm, may music bring us together
- For our church softball team as they gather each Monday at Hoffman Park, have a fun and fan filled season!
- For our 2026 High School graduates, may your faith help you navigate the next adventure of your lives
- For those receiving church scholarships, may they help you on your journey
- For Leo Anthony Plum who was baptized on Sunday, May 17, may he grow in faith and love and may his parents Sarah and Alex, and big brother Anderson be given wisdom, courage and sleep 😊
- For those who worked at Moon Beach, our UCC Church Camp (Rose and Dan Rude, Tim Bylander, Carol Merriman, Lu Lueck, Jane Wakefield, Chuck and Judy Sambs) getting it ready for the season
- For Maddie Giordana and Eric Sayre who were married on May 16, may they grow into the promises they made to each other

Prayers for our World:

- As teams gather for the World Cup, may the 'beautiful game' unite us as nations on this one earth
- For those struggling to afford basic necessities - food, rent, childcare, healthcare - that God would provide for them through caring communities, compassionate assistance, meaningful work, and generous hearts
- For those in our armed forces and their families, may we support them and may God watch over them
- As we approach the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, may we be given courage on the quest to become a more perfect union
- For farmers, especially small family farms, struggling to stay viable with so many economic challenges
- For stability and peace in Sudan, Iran, Gaza and Ukraine
- 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 Garden Geeks and our Lawn Team who keep everything looking great, God bless you all!
- For teachers after a long school year, may you enjoy a break from your labors & be restored in the fall
- For the gift of summer, may we savor every bit of it
- For those who have contributed to our church Scholarship Fund over the years, may it be a blessing
- For those who donated and received blood at our last blood drive, may it bring life
- For Hope Lutheran Church who celebrated their 20th anniversary on Sunday, June 7th, may they grow in love, faith and service to their community

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the families of Joyce Kampstra, Ally Fox, Seth Piphon and Karsten Greenchurch, may they grieve in hope

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

Sunday, June 14, 2026

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!

Loving Neighbor

Mother's Day – Father's Day Diaper Drive: The Mission Ed Committee is once again sponsoring a Diaper Drive between Mother's Day and Father's Day. Starting May 10th and running through June 21st, we will collect diapers and wipes in the gathering area. After Father's Day the diapers will be donated to Our Neighbors' Place, Turning Point and the River Falls Food Pantry. **Please note:** Larger sized diapers are most needed.

Summer Nursery Volunteers Needed: During the summer months our church nursery is staffed by volunteers while our weekly, faithful nursery worker Kahla Fuller enjoys some time off. Please sign up for a Sunday to staff the nursery. Thank you! Use the sign-up sheet at church or online.

Let's Feed Some Kids! Join us on **Wed, Sept 9, from 6-8pm at Tattersall** as we feed 100,000 starving kids right here in River Falls. Our church is one of the sponsors of this Feed My Starving Children event and will have early access to packing times. All our Middle and High School kids will have their first night of Confirmation/Youth Group this night, but EVERYONE is welcome to come and help. Sign up before July 15th to get your spot! Questions to Pastor Chris or Alex.

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. They operate on a short shoe-string budget and are delighted that we will support them. The shelter has three family rooms, a men's wing and a women's wing. They can house up to 50 people. If you have questions, see Carole Mottaz.

Grace Place Donations: Needed items: 55-gallon garbage bags, 13-gallon garbage bags, paper towels, Kleenex, napkins, Ziploc bags, aluminum foil and plastic wrap, light bulbs, batteries: AA, AAA, and 9 volt, cleaning supplies: Fabuloso, window cleaner, disinfectant wipes, toilet bowl cleaner, toilet bowl brushes, cleaning scrubbers, 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

Summer Choir is low stress and low commitment. We simply meet an hour before the service and sing a familiar song. The dates will be **June 21, July 26 and August 16.** Please consider joining us!

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 and lively conversation. Our next meetings are **June 23 & July 7.**

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 **June 23 & July 14**

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wednesday, June 17 at 1:00 pm at Juniors in River Falls**. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

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.

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

Game Day Sunday: Game Day is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next Game Day is **July 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

Softball News: Our game on Monday was fun and exciting. The team worked well together and won by 10 runs. It was great to see everybody. Our next two games are June 15 at 6:15 pm and June 22 at 6:15 pm, both games at Hoffman Park. Players, please try to show up 30 minutes before the game. Come cheer us on! We play every Monday at Hoffman Park throughout the summer. We are the team in the red shirts. Any questions, contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman234b@gmail.com.

VBS Volunteers Needed: VBS requires many adult and teen volunteers. Please join the excitement by volunteering to help. VBS will be July 27-30, 9:00–11:30 am. Please sign up at church or online.

Red Cross Blood Drive: Summer donors needed! Please join our **Wed, July 22 Blood Drive from 11am - 5pm**. Emergency situations are on the rise and fewer active donors puts more pressure on a decreasing blood supply over the next 3 months. One hour of your time can help 3 patients in the coming weeks! Beat the heat with a movie ticket to a summer blockbuster via email PLUS Kwik Tip coupon for a free pint of milk.

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

Summer High School and College Youth Bible Study: Our first meeting will be: **Wed, June 17 at 10am at Selah Vie Bistro and Coffee Cottage**, 208 N Main Street, RF. Alex will buy coffee for the group!

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. 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.

JOIN US FOR A
FREE CONCERT
on the lawn

THURSDAY, JULY 9TH

FROM 6-8 PM

featuring
**SLAPDASH
BLUEGRASS BAND**

and food for purchase

FROM 5:30-7:30 PM

by
**ROLLIN' RIVER
FOOD TRUCK**

at
**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC
110 N 3rd St.
RIVER FALLS, WI**



firstchurchrf.org



715-425-2052

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 5:1-8

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person - though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 9:35-38

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'