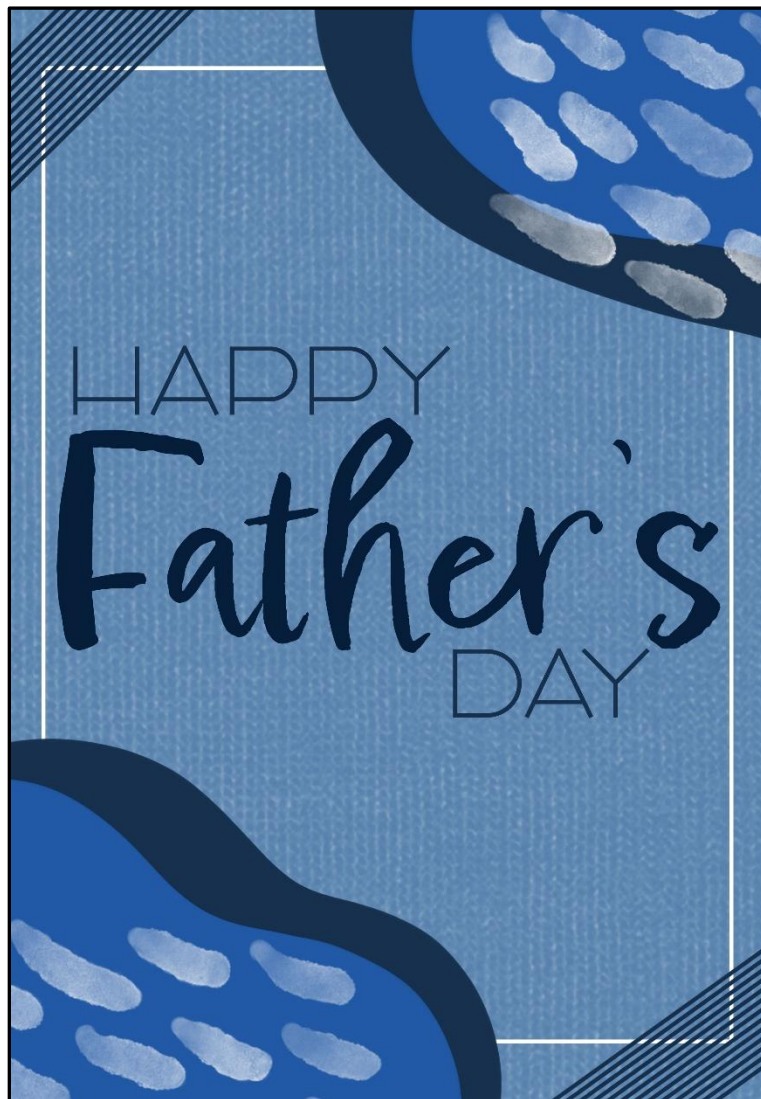


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

June 21, 2026



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

Father's Day

June 21, 2026

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

"When you love somebody, it is no longer yourself who is the center of your own universe. It is the one you love who is. You forget yourself. You deny yourself. You give of yourself, so that by all the rules of arithmetical logic there should be less of yourself than there was to start with. Only by a curious paradox there is more. You feel that at last you really are yourself." - *Wishful Thinking* by Frederick Buechner

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: Abundant grace flowing to us,

P: A listening ear turned toward us,

L: A generous heart giving us the gifts of beauty and friends,

P: A strong arm that helps us up when we fall,

L: These are the gifts of our eternal God and our earthly parents,

P: And are worthy of praise.

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

***HYMN**

Rain Down

Blue #444

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Merciful God, we long for a holy visitation, but confess that we are too distracted to notice when it arrives. We long for peace, but confess that we will not be still long enough to greet it. Forgive us, God. Forgive our misplaced priorities that crowd you out of our lives. Renew in us a right heart for the sake of Christ we pray. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: What a gift it is that we do not remain broken and burdened by the sins of the past.

P: Jesus Christ forgives us, renews us, and enables us to walk in freedom and power.

L: In Christ we are forgiven!

P: Thanks be to God. 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

Love is Flowing

Love is flowing: love is flowing, love is flowing from the fountain of life;

Love is flowing: love is flowing, love is flowing from the fountain of life.

Peace is pouring: peace is pouring, grace is pouring from the fountain of life.

Peace is pouring: peace is pouring, grace is pouring from the fountain of life.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Romans 6:1-4

PSALM 86 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R

Lord, listen to your children praying.

Lord, send your Spirit in this place.

*Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace.*

L: Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant who trusts in you.

P: You are my God; be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all day long. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

L: For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

P: Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my cry of supplication. In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me.

L: There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

P: All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. R

- L: For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.
- P: Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.**
- L: I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name for ever.
- P: For great is your steadfast love towards me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.**
- L: O God, the insolent rise up against me; a band of ruffians seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.
- P: But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.**
- L: Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant; save the child of your serving-maid.
- P: Show me a sign of your favor, so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame, because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me. R**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 10:32-39

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Lead Me, Guide Me

Blue #498

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – from the Iona Ecumenical Community in Scotland**

- L: Let us affirm our faith.
- P: We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of the One God, maker and sustainer of earth, sea and sky. Born of Mary, faithful to the God of Abraham and Sarah, Jesus healed the sick, served the poor, and proclaimed heaven on earth. Condemned by the religious, crucified by the state, He died but transformed even death and rose to life everlasting. He blessed the disciples with his Holy Spirit and sent them forth, east and west, north and south. We commit ourselves to Jesus, to one another as brothers and sisters and to the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

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

Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

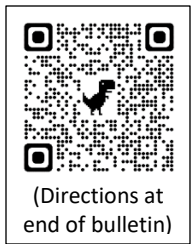
...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and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

MISSION MOMENT – Marshall Skule – Among Friends

GATHERING OUR GIFTS – Summer Choir

Doxology for a New Day

Arr. by Mark Miller



***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**

Gracious God, we give thanks for all who nurture, teach, and care for others. As we offer these gifts and dedicate these 10,000 diapers for families in our community, we ask your blessing upon them. May they be a sign of your love, a source of relief for parents, and a reminder that no one walks alone. Use our offerings and our acts of generosity to bring hope, dignity, and care to those in need. In Jesus' name, we pray. 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: Come people of God, let us sing!

P: **Let us sing for we are God's people and God has done wonderful things.**

L: Let us come into God's presence with joy and thanksgiving.

P: **Let us come into God's presence and let God feed us on the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing. Come Holy Spirit, come!**

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:

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior

***Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry;
While on others you are calling, do not pass me by. Refrain***

***Refrain: Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry;
While on others you are calling, do not pass me by.***

***Let me at your throne of mercy find a sweet relief;
Kneeling there in deep contrition, help my unbelief. Refrain***

***Trusting only in your merit, would I seek your face;
Heal my wounded, broken spirit, save me by your grace. Refrain***

***Be the spring of all my comfort, more than life to me;
Not just here on earth beside me, but eternally. Refrain***

The Healing Hand of Jesus

Congregation join on refrain:

So I will raise my voice in praise to God, I will
kneel be-fore the Lamb; I will give my heart as an
of-fer-ing, I will give you, God, what I am.

I Am the Bread of Life

Blue #703

Eat This Bread

***Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and never be hungry.
Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.***

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

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Blue #520

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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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

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Steve Koecher
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Becky Pajac,
Brian Miller, Liz Swank,
Melissa Oscanyan
Organist: Terry Mithun
Nursery: Melissa Wilson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Sarah Plum
Trustee: Steve Koecher
Coffee
Fellowship: Among Friends Staff
Counters: Marie Roe, Scott Nelson
*Altar table flowers are given by David Reilly
in memory of Ruth Reilly.*

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 14, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,531	\$ 266,720
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 271,392

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:

Eric (friend of Liz Swank), Steve and Janice Withers (father and mother of Erik Withers), Sam Morrisette, Nathaniel (friend of the Kruegers), Sharon (sister of JoAnne Friedell), Bruce (father of Melissa Oscanyan), Marlene (friend of Lu Lueck), Fred Benson

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For the nearly 10,000 diapers given to local families by our church community to the River Falls Food Pantry, Our Neighbors' Place and Turning Point, may they be signs of God's love
- For those who are singing in our summer choir this Sunday, thank you for sharing your gifts!
- For Lyle Woods who turned 100 on June 17th, congratulations on this amazing accomplishment!
- For our Music Team gearing up for the River Falls Days Bluegrass Concert on Thursday, July 9th from 6-8pm, may music bring us together
- For our church softball team as they gather each Monday at Hoffman Park, have a fun and fan filled year!

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 who tend our church garden and our Lawn Team who keep everything looking great, God bless you all!
- For all those who have been given the gift of fatherhood, may you continue to grow into this wonderful gift
- For the gift of summer, may we savor every bit of it
- For those giving blood at our next blood drive on Wednesday, July 22, may it bring life

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Ann Gustafson who died peacefully after a long battle with dementia and whose Memorial Service will be Monday, June 29 at 11am here at church with a visitation an hour before and lunch to follow - may her family be comforted
- For the families of Gary Pieffer (cousin of Rose Rude), Joyce Kampstra, Ally Fox, Seth Pipho 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.

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!

Loving Neighbor

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 next dates will be **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 **Wed, July 15 at 1:00 pm at The Sycamore for a potluck lunch.** 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 on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at 113 East Elm Street and Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at First Congregational at 6:30 pm. For mental health issues, please call 988. For info, call Marg Downing at 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Softball News: What a beautiful night for a softball game, at least the early games. We had many players this week and they all played hard to win the game. We have won two games & lost one. It's fun bringing in new players like Anna, Stacy, Theo, Rhett, & Kevin. Our next two games are June 22 at 6:15 pm & June 29 at 7:30 pm, both 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

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.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 6:1-4

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 10:32-39

‘Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

‘Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.