

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

August 2, 2026



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

August 2, 2026

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

*They need not go away; you give them something to eat.
Jesus, Matthew 14:16*

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: A word spoken, a voice heard,

P: **A dream revealed, a mission received.**

L: God calls, again and again.

P: **God beckons us to follow.**

L: To love, to serve,

P: **To give, again and again.**

L: God invites us to embrace the lonely,

P: **To feed the hungry, to tell the Good News of Jesus,**

All: **To love and serve, and to sing praises all of our days. Come let us worship the
God who leads us into life!**

***HYMN**

How Can I Keep from Singing

Blue #424

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Compassionate God, may our time of worship inspire us to leave this place as peacemakers and joy givers. For the times when our gaze was so fixed upon you that we failed to see the needs all around us, forgive us. For having our heads in the clouds when Jesus was there right beside us, forgive us. For being insensitive and abrupt with a friend or stranger when they had come for help, forgive us. Set us back on the right path. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: God knows our frailties and looks upon us with compassion and mercy.

P: **Let us receive the gift of God's forgiveness with joy and thanksgiving!**

L: In Christ we are forgiven.

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

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, peace is pouring from the fountain of life.

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

Grace is flooding: grace is flooding, grace is flooding from the fountain of life.

Grace is flooding: grace is flooding, grace is flooding from the fountain of life.

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Chris Myers

SONG (Children may return to their families or young children can go to the nursery. Sunday School resumes on Rally Day, September 13.)

I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river.

I've got peace like a river in my soul.

I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river.

I've got peace like a river in my soul.

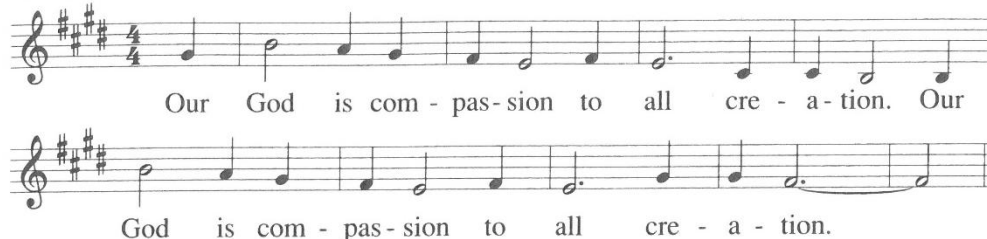
Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

2 Corinthians 9:6-12

PSALM 145:8-9, 14-21 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

Refrain



L: The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

P: **The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.**

L: The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.

P: The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.
L: You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.
P: The LORD is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings.
L: The LORD is near to all who call on God, to all who call on God in truth.
P: God fulfils the desire of all who trust God and hears their cry and saves them.
L: The LORD watches over all who love God, but all the wicked will be destroyed.
P: My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh will bless God's holy name for ever and ever. R

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 14:13-21

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

I Sing the Mighty Power of God

Black #12

***STATEMENT OF FAITH (taken from the New Zealand Church)**

**You, O God, are supreme and holy. You create our world and give us life.
 Your purpose overarches everything we do. You have always been with us.
 You are God.**

**You, O God, are infinitely generous, good beyond all measure.
 You came to us before we came to you.**

**You have revealed and proved your love for us in Jesus Christ, who lived and died
 and rose again. You are with us now.**

You are God.

**You, O God, are Holy Spirit. You empower us to be your gospel in the world.
 You reconcile and hear; you overcome death. You are our God. We worship you.
 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 – Jeff Pajac

How Great Thou Art

***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.*



***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

O God, may our gifts be transformed into food: water and bread, justice and peace. We offer our gifts this day, so that the world may come to rejoice fully in your sacred love, which is given and shared with all humankind. In the name of the generous One. 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: Today we gather at the table of the Lord where ordinary gifts of bread and wine are shared, where a vision for a new heaven and a new earth shine forth for all to see.
- P: **We come to be filled where once we were hungry.**
- L: We come to have our thirst quenched where once we were parched.
- P: **We come to find peace in a broken world.**
- All: **We come and gather around the table so that together we may become God's faithful followers.**

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:

As We Gather at Your Table

***As we gather at your table, as we listen to your word,
Help us know, O God, your presence; let our hearts and minds be stirred.***

***Nourish us with sacred story till we claim it as our own;
Teach us through this holy banquet how to make Love's victory known.***

***Turn our worship into witness in the sacrament of life;
Send us forth to love and serve you, bringing peace where there is strife.***

***Give us, Christ, your great compassion to forgive as you forgave;
May we still behold your image in the world you died to save.***

***Gracious Spirit, help us summon other guests to share that feast
Where triumphant Love will welcome those who had been last and least.***

***There no more will envy bind us nor will pride our peace destroy,
As we join with saints and angels to repeat the sounding joy.***

One Bread, One Body

***Refrain: One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
one cup of blessing which we bless.***

***And we, though many, throughout the earth,
we are one body in this one Lord.***

Gentile or Jew, servant or free, woman or man no more. Refrain

Many the gifts, many the works, one in the Lord of all. Refrain

Grain for the fields, scattered and grown, gathered to one for all. Refrain

Let Us Be Bread

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain



Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord, bro-ken and shared,
life for the world. Let us be wine, love free-ly poured.
Let us be one in the Lord.

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**

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Black #43

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Suzanne Hagen
Deacons: Becky Pajac, Heidi Cavaness,
Laura Anderson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Jenny and Hannah Luedtke
Welcomers: Suzanne Hagen, Jan Johnson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Matt Meyer
Coffee
Fellowship: Kristin Andes and Tom Magraw
Counters: Trish Graves, Mark Anderson
Altar table flowers are given by Lillian Tan in thanksgiving.

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>July 26, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 2,930	\$ 336,218
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 339,240

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), Bruce (father of Melissa Oscanyan), Marlene (friend of Lu Lueck), Kathy (relative of Ann Nelson), Ryan Cottrell (friend of the Koechers), Jeff (brother of Steve Healy), Diana (friend of Janice Healy), Greg (friend of Ron Ruhnke), Nolan, Kelly (sister-in-law of Cindy Gandrud), Jill (daughter of JoAnn Mathews), Connie Pajac (sister of Jeff Pajac)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our 2026 VBS program 'Peace Be With You' which ran this past week with over 50 kids, what a great week!
- For the 10,936 (yes, we counted them!) diapers given to local families by our church community to the River Falls Food Pantry, Our Neighbors' Place and Turningpoint, may they be signs of God's love
- For those singing on our last summer choir date August 16, thank you for sharing your gifts!
- For our 2026 Youth Musical 'The Rockslinger', August 10-13, may it be a fun and faith-filled week!
- For Lyle Woods who turned 100 on June 17th, congratulations on this amazing accomplishment!
- For our church softball team as they gather each Monday at Hoffman Park, have a fun and fan filled year!

Prayers for our World:

- For peace in our world, our communities and our own hearts
- For those affected by recent tornadoes in Appleton, Neenah and Menasha, with the help of good neighbors may they recover quickly
- 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
- 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 Bobbie Kuhn who celebrates her 80th birthday on Thurs, August 27, may you enjoy many more!
- For our Garden Geeks who tend our church garden and our Lawn Mowing Team who keep everything looking great, God bless you all!
- For those who helped out with VBS this week with snacks, crafts, teaching, serving, God bless you all!
- For the Kruegers who cooked and Trish, Derick, Rhett, Stella and Cheyenne who served and cleaned up after the VBS meal this week, we could not do this week without you
- For the gift of summer, may we savor every bit of it
- For those who gave blood at our last blood drive on Wednesday, July 22, may it bring life

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the families of Glenn Hansen, Ann Gustafson, Gary Pieffer (cousin of Rose Rude), Joyce Kampstra, 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!

Rally Day: Sunday School, Sunday Morning Bible Study, choir and bells resume, resume on Rally Day, **September 13**. All children who are three years old (and toilet-trained) are welcome in Sunday School. Previously registered students do not need to register again. New students should register. Registration forms are available at church or online.

Sunday School Teachers Needed: Sunday School is one of the most critical ministries we offer to support children as they learn and grow in faith. First Congregational uses a shared teaching model, so a team of three teachers shares responsibilities for an individual class. We need a *minimum* of 12 volunteers. Please, please volunteer. We have several extremely faithful teachers who have taught for many years. We need to add to the list of willing teachers. All curriculum and materials are provided, and teachers teach approximately once every three weeks. For more information, please contact Pastor Stacy. To volunteer, please sign up at church or online.

Loving Neighbor

Summer Nursery Volunteers Needed: During the summer months our church nursery is staffed by volunteers. Please sign up for a Sunday to staff the nursery. Thank you! Use the sign-up sheet at church or online.

Summer Kitchen Help Needed: Our church family chefs, Andy and Christina Krueger, will cook for the Children's Musical dinner. They will need help serving and cleaning up. Please volunteer. The sign-up list is on the table in the gathering space. We still need *many* volunteers. Please help!

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 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

Summer Choir is low stress and low commitment. We simply meet an hour before the service and sing a familiar song. The last date will be **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 & lively conversation. Our next meetings are **Aug 4 & 18**.

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 **Aug 11 & 25**.

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.

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, Aug 19 at 1:00 pm at Tattersall in River Falls**. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

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 **August 16 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 St. & Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at the church at 6:30 pm. For mental health issues, please call 988. For info, call Marg Downing at 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Softball News: Like the heat, try church softball on Monday nights. We tried but couldn't come up with enough runs to win against 1st Covenant. We lost so we are now 4 wins and 5 losses and tied for 4th. The field is reserved for the city on August 3rd. We have one more regular season game on August 10 at 7:30 pm against The River. The last two nights, August 17 and 24, are playoffs games with the times yet to be determined. August 24th will also be a fun night for the teams with a picnic plus the finals of the playoffs. Come cheer us on! We play at Hoffman Park. We are the team in the red shirts. Any questions, contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman234b@gmail.com.

Annual Ice Cream Social: Held at the Kinnickinnic Historical Church, 1276 County Road J, RF, **TODAY, Aug 2 from 1:00 to 5:00 pm**. There will be entertainment, ice cream, pie, cake and tours of the Kinnickinnic Cemetery. Please see the flyer for more information. To volunteer or donate a pie, please contact Patti Phillips at 715-977-0354

Night of Dinner/Theater: You are invited to a night of dinner and a show on **Thurs, August 13**. Dinner will be served starting at **6:00 pm**, followed by the main feature: the musical *Rock Slinger and His Greatest Hit*. It is the story of David and Goliath. The show has fun music and clever lines. Please come to support the young people in the congregation. Sign up at church or online.

Tools for School: Once again, we are collecting school supplies for local families. As you are out shopping, please start collecting everything students might need this fall. The School Supply Event will be on **August 17 & 18** here at church. Typically, we serve about 300 students. Thank you for your generous support of this needed local ministry. Please also sign up to help sort and distribute items.

Red Cross Blood Drive: The next Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church is on **Monday, September 28, from 11:00 am–5:00 pm**. See the flyer for more info. Call 1-800-733-2767 or go to www.redcrossblood.org and enter: firstcongregationalrf to schedule an appointment.

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 Children's Musical: August 10-13, 9:00 am to Noon. The show will be *Rock Slinger and His Greatest Hits*. The musical is for children who have completed kindergarten through completed grade 6. Emma Cruciani will be the director. Registration forms are online and at church.

Summer Youth Group Events: Mon, Aug 3 – Activate – Alex can schedule any time before 5:00 pm and will reserve the 90-minute experience around the group's availability! Cost is \$10 per person, friends are welcome with advance notice. (Alex must reserve tickets.) Please email Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com to confirm going!

Tues, August 4 - Main Event – Main Event is a brand new space that is opening in Woodbury featuring bowling, virtual reality, laser tag, billiards, arcade games, gravity ropes, human crane, and more! Cost is expected to be \$10-15. Friends are welcome with advanced notice. Please email Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com to confirm going!

Sun, August 16 - Kayaking the Kinni – Join us for kayaking the Kinni! The group will decide if we are kayaking the upper or lower. When you sign up, please let me know if you have your own kayaks or will need to borrow one. Please email Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com to confirm going!

Fall Confirmation Orientation: The 2026 Confirmation Orientation for grades 6 – 8 will be on Rally Day following worship on Sunday, September 13. This meeting is **required** for all confirmands and their parents. The 2026 Orientation for High School Confirmands (grade 9) and Church Interns will be following Sunday, September 20. This meeting is **required** for all confirmands and their parents. ***Please reserve the dates and time now to avoid conflicts.***

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



SCRIPTURE LESSON: 2 Corinthians 9:6-12

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written,

‘He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness endures for ever.’

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 14:13-21

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ Jesus said to them, ‘They need not go away; you give them something to eat.’ They replied, ‘We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.’ And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.