

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

August 9, 2026



Petrusaltar by Konrad Witz

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

August 9, 2026

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

"Faith is not the belief that God will do what you want. It is the belief that God will do what is right." - Max Lucado

"Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." - Martin Luther King Jr.

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.
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GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Here, in this place,

P: **God's goodness delivers us and rescues us.**

L: Here, in this place,

P: **God hears us and helps us.**

L: Here, in this place,

P: **God is our hope and our trust.**

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

***HYMN**

For the Beauty of the Earth

Blue #40

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Almighty God, **you love us, but we often struggle to love you. You call us, but too often we do not listen to your word. Wrapped up in our own concerns, we walk away from neighbors in need. God of grace, help us to admit our own shortcomings, so that as you come to us in mercy we may repent, turn to you, and receive forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Our God does not want us to dwell on the sins of the past.

P: In Christ God is making all things new, including us.

All: Let us embrace the forgiveness of God and be at peace, with God, with our neighbors and with ourselves.

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

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Romans 10:10-15

PSALM 85:8-13 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

Response

Antiphon: Carolyn Jennings, 1994

Unison

Chords: Eb, Bb/D, Cm, Gm/Bb, Abadd6, Ab, Eb

Show us your stead-fast love, O God, and grant us your sal - va - tion.

L: Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for God will speak peace to God's people, to those who turn to God in their hearts.

P: Surely God's salvation is at hand for those who trust God, that God's glory may dwell in our land.

L: Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

P: Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

L: The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

P: Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for your steps. R

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 14:22-33

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

The Gift of Love

Blue #397

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – South Africa**

**We believe in one God who created all the world,
who will unite all things in Christ
and who wants all people to live together in one family.**

**We believe in God the Son who became human:
died and rose in triumph to reconcile all the world to God,
to break down every separating barrier of race, culture or class
and to unite all people into one body.**

**We believe in God the Spirit, the pledge of God's coming reign
who gives the Church power to proclaim the good news to all the world,
to love and serve all people, to strive for justice and peace:
to warn that God judges both the individual and the nations;
and to summon all the world to accept God's reign, here and now. Amen.**

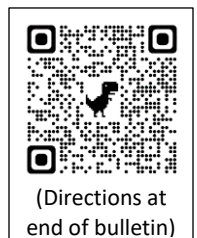
THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

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 – Kristin Andes

The Christ Child's Lullaby
arr. by Kathleen Blackwell-Plank



*OFFERTORY



Let us bring ev - 'ry gift, let us trea - sure ev - 'ry grace: As you've giv - en to us, let us share.



In our neigh bor to day we will meet you face to face, Let your love be the rule ev - 'ry - where.

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Loving God, we lift our thanks to you for granting us safe journeys across rolling waters. We thank you for the work of this community of faith, and for providing us the opportunity to share these gifts of our work and our love, so that its work may continue and grow. 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: Beloved in Christ, this is the joyful feast of the people of God!
P: **Come let us gather to celebrate a feast for all time.**
L: Come let us join with Jesus and his disciples in an upper room.
P: **Come let us join the saints of all ages who have come in faith all along the way.**
All: **Come let us let God feed us with the bread of life and be sent with the power of the Holy Spirit to be the body of Christ for the world.**

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:

I Say Yes

***I say "Yes," my Lord. I say "Yes," my Lord.
I say "Yes," my Lord, in all the good times, through all the bad times
I say "Yes," my Lord, to every word you speak.***

Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

Blue #326

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

***What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit; oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to our God in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to our God in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden, burdened with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to our God in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to our God in prayer!
Jesus' arm will take and shield you; you will find a solace there.***

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**

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior

Black #551

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Rene Bylander
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Becky Pajac,
Liz Swank, Heidi Cavaness,
Brodie Lueck
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery:
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Matt Bastien
Coffee
Fellowship:
Counters: Diane Welsh, Scott Nelson

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>Aug 2, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,427	\$ 341,245
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 350,548

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'

SCHOOL SUPPLY DONATIONS

We welcome all school supply donations, but
especially need:

*Quality Backpacks

(Need to last all year-Nike, Adidas, Lands End, High Sierra)

*Ticonderoga Pencils

*Dry Erase Markers

*Pencil Top Erasers

*Large Glue Sticks

*Wide Ruled Composition Notebooks

*TI-30XIIS Scientific Calculators

*Experience the calming, soothing effect
of live therapeutic music!*

You are invited to a free concert by

**Certified Therapeutic Musician
Kristin Andes and Her Harp**

**Tuesday, August 25
6:30 – 7:30 pm**

**First Congregational Church
110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI**

Presented by the WISE Team

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 Deiss (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), Krisan (friend of Vicki Sippel)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our 2026 VBS program 'Peace Be With You' which ran last week with over 50 kids, what a great week!
- For all those who bought, unloaded and will eat peaches as part of our youth fundraiser, enjoy them!
- 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 in our summer choir (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, child care, 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 the gift of peaches
- For Bobbie Kuhn who celebrates her 80th birthday on Thursday, 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 last week with snacks, crafts, teaching, serving, God bless you all!
- For all those who cooked, served and cleaned up after the VBS meal, we could not do this 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 family of Robert (Bob) Peterson, brother of Larry Peterson, who died this past week, may his family be comforted
- 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!

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. 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.

Rally Day: Sunday School, Sunday Morning Bible Study, choir and bells resume, resume on **Rally Day, Sept 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.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study: The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study will resume on **Wed, Sept 16, 1:00-2:30**. The group will study Revelation. Copies of the discussion book are available in the office for \$20.00 each. The fall is a terrific time to being participating in Bible Study. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

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.

Kitchen Help Needed: Our church family chefs, Andy and Christina Krueger, will cook for the Children's Musical dinner on **Thurs, Aug 13**. They will need help serving and cleaning up. Please volunteer. The sign-up list is on the table.

Journey House: (Ecumenical young adult outreach, located at 143 E Cascade Ave) is getting ready for the new school year! If you're interested in contributing, here are some ideas: **A Welcome to School Care Kit and Goody Bag**. We are asking for a donation of \$25. These bags will be what we hand out during the Involvement Fair and given to students throughout the months of September and October when we table. We are hoping to have 50 bags sponsored (if not more); **A suggested donation of \$30 to help sponsor our weekly gathering, Journey Nights**. The school changed their funding model for groups (less money for us to use) on top of everything being more expensive. Those who give any amount will be recognized. Those who give \$30 or more will receive their own Journey Night passport as a thank you gift. (These are what we are giving the students that give them a fun way to engage more with our Journey Night conversation.) ; **Amazon Wish List**. We created and plan on keeping up with an [Amazon Wish List](#).

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!

Harp Concert: Experience the calming, soothing effect of live therapeutic music. You are invited to a free concert by Certified Therapeutic Musician Kristin Andes and her harp on **Tues, Aug 25, from 6:30-7:30 pm**. Join us! Presented by the WISE Team

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 18 & Sept 1**.

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 Days are **August 16 and September 20 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: 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.

Night of Dinner/Theater: You are invited to a night of dinner & a show on **Thurs, Aug 13**. Dinner will be served 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 sign up and come to support the young people in the congregation.

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.

Committee Needs Update: The Nominating Committee has been busy calling people, talking in person and leaving voicemails with a number of people in our congregation this summer. Thank you to all that said **YES!!** when asked to serve. **We are still in need of 2 Deacons and 1 person for the Christian Ed Committee.** Please consider giving of your time to help our church in any of these openings. The term begins in September 2026 and runs for three years.

Red Cross Blood Drive: The next Blood Drive held here is on **Mon, Sept 28, 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.

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: **Aug 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. Registration online and at church.

Summer Youth Group Event: **Sun, Aug 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.***

THE ROCK SLINGER & HIS GREATEST HITS

CHILDREN'S MUSICAL

August 10 -13, 2026 from 9-noon

Directed by Emma Cruciani, accompanied by Marsha Pearson

Dinner & Performance Aug. 13th, 6:00 PM

Completed Kindergarten-Grade 6

ALL ARE WELCOME ⚡ NO CHARGE

First Congregational UCC

110 N 3rd St. River Falls, WI | 715-425-2052

Scan QR code to register or visit: www.firstchurchrf.org



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SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 10:10-15

For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

SCHOOL SUPPLY EVENT

For River Falls School District
Families In Need

Location: First Congregational Church
110 N Third St



AUGUST 17 4:30PM-6:30PM SUPPLIES, SHOES & PICNIC MEAL
AUGUST 18 10:00AM-NOON SUPPLIES & SHOES

*First National Bank RF(through their 5K Fundraiser) donates all the shoes for the event-shoes cannot be guaranteed for every child

- To register, the parent/guardian and student must be in attendance
- Event volunteers will assist the students with supplies & shoes.
- Due to limited event space, parents/guardians will wait for their student on the main level of the church.