

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

August 16, 2026



Woman of Canaan
By Sadao Watanabe
Japan, 1965

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

August 16, 2026

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

“Empathy has no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It’s simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of ‘You’re not alone.’”
- Brené Brown

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: We are here to touch the hem of grace,
P: To let go of the hidden worry, the crippling wound,
L: To feel a surge of forgiveness, a rush of joy,
P: To touch hope and linger in mystery,
L: To hear our name whispered and life affirmed,
P: To sing praises and dwell in peace.
All: Come let us worship the God who leads us into life!

***HYMN**

Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart

Blue #113

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Lord Jesus Christ, you come to us as friend and Savior.
**P: Lord Jesus, teach us more about your amazing love and help us to love with
confidence and courage.**
L: Help us to live without fear and fill us in your Spirit with hope and joy.

P: Take from our hearts the desire for revenge and fill us with the ability to forgive freely and without condition.

L: Release us from the bondage of unforgiveness.

All: Renew our spirits and empower us to love unconditionally. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: In this, we have assurance of God's forgiveness:

P: In Christ God is at work, reconciling to God and to one another.

L: Because we have received God's mercy,

P: We are able to grant mercy to those who have wronged us.

All: 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**

Refrain: *Gloria! Gloria! Highest glory to you!*

Gloria! Gloria! Highest glory to you!

Open now our lips and our mouths shall give praise. Refrain

O Lord, rush to help to deliver your world. Refrain

Maker, Spirit, Friend, you are great mystery! Refrain

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Acts 15:6-12

PSALM 133 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R

U - nite us, God, u - nite us in your ev - er - last - ing love.

L: How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

P: It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.

L: It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.

P: For there the LORD ordained his blessing, life forevermore. **R**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 15:21-28

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

*HYMN

The Healing Hand of Jesus



The musical score is written for a single voice part in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of seven staves of music. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The lyrics are as follows:

I know the heal-ing hand of Je - sus;
Ly-ing bro-ken in my dark-est hour,
As he knelt be-side me in my sor - row

I have felt his mer-cy and his grace.
bruised and beat - en, left with-out a prayer,
I could see the scars there in his hands,

I have heard his words of com - pas - sion
then I felt that heal-ing hand of pow - er
And I re - a - lized this wound-ed heal - er,

and I know that he is in this place
when the Sav - ior came and found me there.
all my pain, he tru - ly un - der - stands.

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.

***STATEMENT OF FAITH - Indonesia**

I believe in God, who is love and who has given the earth to all people.

I believe in Jesus Christ, who came to heal us, and to free us from all forms of oppression.

I believe in the Spirit of God, who works in and through all who are turned toward the truth.

I believe in the community of faith, which is called to be at the service of all people.

I believe in God's promise to finally destroy the power of sin in us all, and to establish the kingdom of justice and peace for all humankind.

I do not believe that suffering need be in vain, that death is the end, that the disfigurement of our world is what God intended.

But I dare to believe, always and in spite of everything, in God's power to transform and transfigure, fulfilling the promise of a new heaven and a new earth where justice and peace will flourish. Amen.

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

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

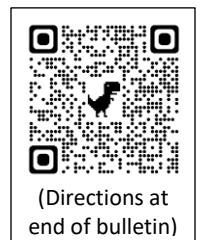
...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and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

MISSION MOMENT – Madeline Pietz - Mission Ed Team

GATHERING OUR GIFTS – Summer Choir

Hope Lingers On

arr. by Lissa Schneckenburger



***OFFERTORY**

Now Thank We All Our God

***Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
Who, from our mother's arms, has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.***

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

God of all life, **we give you praise and thanks this day for these gifts that come from our hearts and from our labors. We give them to you with deep gratitude. You have so richly blessed us through the years. Grant that these gifts of our love for you are also gifts of love for your church and for your peoples. Help us to be faithful always, and truly giving of our lives to you. 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 healed people. They came to him looking for wholeness and healing.
P: **He healed them in body, mind, and spirit.**
L: We too need healing.
P: **So, we come to the table of the Great Healer to be forgiven and made whole.**

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:

Here I Am, Lord

***I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?***

**Refrain: Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you
calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.**

**I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send? Refrain
I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send? Refrain**

Let Us Break Bread Together

**Let us break bread together on our knees;
Let us break bread together on our knees;**

**Refrain: When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.**

**Let us drink wine together on our knees;
Let us drink wine together on our knees; Refrain**

**Let us praise God together on our knees;
Let us praise God together on our knees; Refrain**

This is the Body of Christ

**This is the body of Christ, broken that we may be whole;
This cup, as promised by God, true to his word, cradles our Lord;
Food for the good of the soul.**

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

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Kristin Andes
Deacons: Liz Swank, Melissa Oscanyan,
Heidi Cavaness, Kathy
Tomlinson, Laura Anderson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Jacob and Anna Morrison
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Louie Filkins
Coffee
Fellowship: Knitting Group
Counters: Jane Truesdill, Dennis Linder
*Altar table flowers are given by Jean Smith in
memory of her parents' August birthdays,
Marlyn and Bernice Mohr.*

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 9, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,502	\$ 347,747
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 361,856

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), 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), Dave Woeste, Lu Lueck

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our summer youth musical "The Rock Slinger," the story of David and Goliath which 16 of our kids presented this past week, what amazing things you can do in a week with some help, thank you!
- For our 2026 VBS program "Peace Be With You" which ran recently with over 50 kids, what a great week!
- For the Tools for Schools program this week which will give over 400 River Falls kids school supplies, may this help them and their families have a great school year
- 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 this Sunday, August 16, thank you for sharing your gifts!
- For our church softball team as they play their final games of the season, thanks for a fun filled year!

Prayers for our World:

- For all those getting ready for school, teachers, students, staff and college students moving in, may you have a great and fruitful year
- 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 our Among Friends program as they seek more board members (see Norma Revels or Marshall Skule for details, and may their program continue to grow and provide support to families with dementia

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 the gift of summer, may we savor every bit of it
- For those who gave blood at our last blood drive, 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 recently, may his family be comforted
- For the family of Krisan Shaw, friend of Vicki Sippel, who died recently, may her family remember her with thanksgiving
- 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.

Sunday School Teachers' Meeting: Sunday School teachers are asked to attend a meeting on **Thurs, Sept 10, 6:30 pm**. This meeting is a chance to get organized for the new Sunday School year. The meeting will conclude by 7:30 pm.

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.

Sunday Morning Bible Study: Sunday morning Bible study groups resumes on Rally Day, **September 13**. The group discusses the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets at **9:00–9:50** Sunday mornings in the Youth Room. Please join us! For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

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.

Wednesday School Workers Needed: Wednesday School begins on **October 7**. We need volunteers to provide snacks on a rotating basis and adult and teen volunteers to help with the children. Please sign the list on the sign-up table or volunteer on the website.

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.

Journey House: (Ecumenical young adult outreach) is getting ready for the new school year! If you're interested in contributing, here are some ideas: **A Welcome to School Care Kit & Goody Bag**. We are asking for a donation of \$25. The bags will be handed out to students; **A suggested donation of \$30 to help sponsor our weekly gathering, Journey Nights; Amazon Wish List**. We created and plan on keeping up with an Amazon Wish List.

Among Friends Volunteers Needed: The program meets two days a week and has 12 active guests. Training is provided & the rewards are phenomenal! They are particularly in need of male volunteers but are willing to receive all. Contact them at amongfriendsrf@gmail.com

Among Friends Board Members Needed: They need board members. They meet on the second Monday of each month at 4:00 pm. Please see Norma Revels for details.

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

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!

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 25 & Sept 8**.

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 **Aug 16 at 11:45 am**.

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: It was another glorious night for softball. We had some great hits, tense moments, and some calls not to our favor, but that's the way the game goes. We won giving us a record of 5 wins and 5 losses. Next week, playoffs begin & our game is **Aug 17 at 7:30 pm**, the field and team are yet to be determined. **August 24th** will also be a fun night with a picnic & one field being a fun game & the other field will be the playoff games. Come join us! We will have enough food for all. Any questions, contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman234b@gmail.com.

Tools for School: We are collecting school supplies for local families. The School Supply Event will be **August 17 & 18** here at church. Typically, we serve about 300 students. Thank you for your generous support.

Side by Side Choir: For people living with memory or thinking changes, their care partners, family, friends & community volunteers. It is a welcoming choir to connect & thrive by sharing music, joy & laughter! Join us weekly on **Mondays at 10:00 am** for our fall season. **Rehearsals start on Sept 14**, and will conclude with a **concert on Sat, Dec 5 at 10:30 am**. To learn more or sign-up contact Norma Revels at 651-416-9530 or sidebysidechoir@gmail.com

Committee Needs Update: 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. 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

Fall Confirmation Orientation: The Confirmation Orientation for grades 6–8 will be following worship on Sun, Sept 13. This meeting is **required** for all confirmands & their parents. The Orientation for High School Confirmands (grade 9) & Church Interns will be Sun, Sept 20. This meeting is **required** for all confirmands & their parents.

Wednesday School: All children who will be in kindergarten through Grade 5 in the fall are invited to participate in Wednesday School. Elementary students in River Falls are picked up at the four elementary schools in town at the end of the school day and it concludes at 5:15. Registration and permission forms are available at church and online. Wednesday School begins **October 7**. Please contact Pastor Stacy with questions.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Acts 15:6-12

The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

Children's Music – Rock Slinger and His Greatest Hit