

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

September 6, 2026



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

September 6, 2026

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

9:30 am

Gathering

“All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity.”
- 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: Eyes that peer into a computer screen,

P: **Minds that search for teachable truths,**

L: Hands that juggle figures or transform blank canvases into colorful scenes,

P: **Fingers that turn written scrawl into poetry and verse,**

L: Arms that carry a newly crafted cabinet or an inbox of the day's emails.

P: **Minds and bodies, laboring for the good, working for justice, hoping their work makes a difference in the divine order.**

L: God receives our labor and fits it into the whirling universe.

P: **Each effort offered in love is a gift to our gracious God who welcomes our work and cherishes our praise.**

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

***HYMN**

All Things Bright and Beautiful

Blue #30

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Peter once asked Jesus how often he should forgive people who did him wrong. Much to his disappointment, Jesus answered,

P: **“Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.”**

L: O God, this seems like a lot to take from anyone.

P: **Forgiving, even once, is not easy for us.**

L: In a world where we are told not to get angry but to get even.

P: **Forgiving seventy-seven times seems hard.**

L: Send us your grace, O God, that we might be agents of forgiveness and your love.

P: **And having received your grace, may we be ready to forgive one another.**

All: **Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Jesus Christ, who taught us how to forgive, continues to forgive us,

P: **Not once, but over and over again.**

L: The mercy of the Lord is everlasting.

P: **Let us believe the Good News of the Gospel.**

L: In Christ we are forgiven and set free for service in his name.

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**

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.

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.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Romans 13:8-14

Paul, believing the second coming is imminent, writes that love is the fulfilling of the law.

PSALM 119:33-40 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



L: Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes, and I will observe it to the end.

P: **Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.**

L: Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.
P: **Turn my heart to your decrees, and not to selfish gain.**
L: Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; give me life in your ways.
P: **Confirm to your servant your promise, which is for those who trust you.**
L: Turn away the disgrace that I dread, for your ordinances are good.
P: **See, I have longed for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life.**

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 18:1-5

Jesus teaches his disciples true greatness.

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

*HYMN

Jesus Loves Me

Blue #437

*STATEMENT OF FAITH – The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. 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 – Roger Kampstra

My Father Watches Over Me



*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.*

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of all Creation, **we offer our gifts in gratitude for all that has been given to us. Use our gifts and our lives with mercy and grace, that through us others may see 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: Beloved in Christ, the Gospel tells us that on the first day of the week, Jesus Christ was raised from death and appeared to Mary Magdalene. In the evening on the same day, he walked and talked with two disciples and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

P: **This is the joyful feast of the people of God. Men and women, young and old, come from the east and the west, the north and the south, and gather about Christ's table.**

L: This table is for all people who desire to know the power and presence of Jesus Christ and to share in the community of God's people.

P: **We are ready to come to the table to be fed.**

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:

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Blue #461

Alleluia Give Thanks to the Risen Lord

Blue #291

Bind Us Together

Congregation join on refrain:

***Bind us together, Lord, bind us together
with cords that cannot be broken.***

***Bind us together, Lord, bind us together,
bind us together in love.***

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**

Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing

Blue #748

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Marie Roe
Deacons: Paul Shepherd, Ann Nelson,
Kathy Tomlinson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Rick Price
Coffee
Fellowship: Diane Olson
Counters: Trish Graves, Marie Roe

Altar table flowers are given by Larry and Barb Peterson in celebration of their 59th wedding anniversary.

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 30, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 7,677	\$ 391,855
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 395,780

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'
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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), 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, Laurie (sister of Becky Pajac), Joan Hyland

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For Rally Day NEXT Sunday with the return of 10am worship, Sunday School, Bible Study and our choir, may it be a fun and faith filled day
- For the Tools for School program which recently provided over 350 River Falls kids school supplies, may this help them and their families have a great school year
- For our summer youth musical "The Rock Slinger," the story of David and Goliath which 16 of our kids presented recently, 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 all those who bought, unloaded and ate peaches as part of our youth fundraiser, enjoy them!
- For our church softball team as they played their final game of the season, thanks for a fun 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, and for those in our church who contributed \$5000 to help them rebuild, 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 Rev. Bob Wang who began this week as our Minister for Community and Outreach, may he use his many gifts and help us become a more loving, generous and welcoming community
- For Darlene Sumption who celebrates her 100th birthday in September, you are an inspiration!
- For the gift of our Sunday School teachers, you are God's workers in our midst, thank you
- For the gift of the Minnesota State Fair, let the good times (and food!) roll!
- For Bobbie Kuhn who celebrated 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 our Youth Fund which received \$3136 from those wonderful peaches we all enjoyed
- For those who will give blood at our next blood drive on Monday, September 28, may it bring life

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For those who will be welcomed home to the church Memorial Garden, Kate Wolfe on September 16 and Glenn Hansen on October 17, may their memory continue to inspire us
- For the family of Kyle Hamble (cousin of Jamie Mills) who died this past week, may his family grieve in hope
- For the family of Terry Mills, father of Tim Mills, who died this past week, may his family be comforted
- For the family of Kathy Deiss (relative of Ann Nelson) who died peacefully surrounded by family and whose funeral was September 4th in Ellsworth, may she join the saints in light
- For the families of Robert (Bob) Peterson (brother of Larry Peterson), Krisan Shaw, Glenn Hansen, may they be remembered with thanksgiving

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' 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.

Fall Worship Series: Faith In Our Heads, Hearts and Hands: What does it mean to have faith? Is faith something we believe, something we feel, or something we do? The answer is yes! Join us **Sept 13, 20 & 27** for a three-week worship series exploring Faith: Head, Heart & Hands. Just as we each have different ways of expressing love, we may also have a natural "faith language." Some of us connect with God through questions, learning, and ideas; others through prayer, worship, and experience; and still others through serving, helping, and putting faith into action. Over these 3 Sundays, we'll explore our own faith language while also discovering how God may be inviting us to grow in the other two - because a vibrant, growing faith needs head, heart, and hands.

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

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

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 **Sept 15 & 29**.

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 **Sept 8 & 22**.

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 **Sept 20 at 11:45 am**.

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, Sept 16 at 1:00 pm at Mariachi Loco in River Falls**. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

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: What a fun season and great team! We placed third behind two tough teams. Our team is bonded by friendships, family, and team spirit cheering each other on through all situations of many games. We welcomed 5 new players this year and they all said, see you next season, yeah! It's fun meeting new people, sharing an activity, and bringing together fellowship in honor of our God. Thank you to our team, see the picture for players this year. Thank you also to our faithful fans: Barry, Bobbie, Jill, Patty, Karen, Rachael and her son, Allie, Lou, Lu, Fallon, Lee, and many more who came to cheer us on. See you all again next May for practice and June for our next season.

Side by Side Choir: For people living with memory or thinking changes, their care partners, family, friends & community volunteers who enjoy helping others. It is a welcoming choir where people gather here at the church 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

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 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.



Rally Day – Sunday, September 13

On Rally Day, Sunday School, Sunday Morning Bible Study, Choir and Bells resume. All children who are three years old through grade 8 are welcome in Sunday School.

Our schedule for that day will be:

- 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal
- 9:00 am Sunday Morning Bible Study
- 10:00 am Worship with Choir
- 10:15 am Children (Pre-School – Grade 8) Leave for
Sunday School
- 11:00 am Coffee Fellowship with Root Beer Floats
- 11:15 am Confirmation Orientation for Grades 6 – 8 and
Parents

(The Orientation for High School Students is Sunday, Sept 20)



SCRIPTURE LESSON: Romans 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 18:1-5

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'

Summer 2026