

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin
September 13, 2026**



A GROWING FAITH NEEDS
Heart, Head & Hands

WHAT WE TRUST. WHAT WE BELIEVE. HOW WE LIVE.



SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 13



Heart:

A Faith
You Can Feel



SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 20



Head:

A Faith That
Changes Your Mind



SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 27



Hands:

A Faith
You Can See



**First Congregational
United Church of Christ**
— RIVER FALLS —

Our mission is to *love God* and *serve others*.
Everyone is welcome because everyone matters.

www.firstchurchrf.org

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

September 13, 2026

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 am

Gathering

"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting;
it has been found difficult and left untried"
- G.K. Chesterton

"God put me on earth to accomplish a certain number of things.
Right now I am so far behind, I will never die."
- Calvin and Hobbes

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: From the world's weariness

P: **You lift us up**

L: To the summit of hope

P: **You carry us**

L: Now let us gather for worship, O God

P: **With ears ready to listen.**

L: Minds ready to be awakened

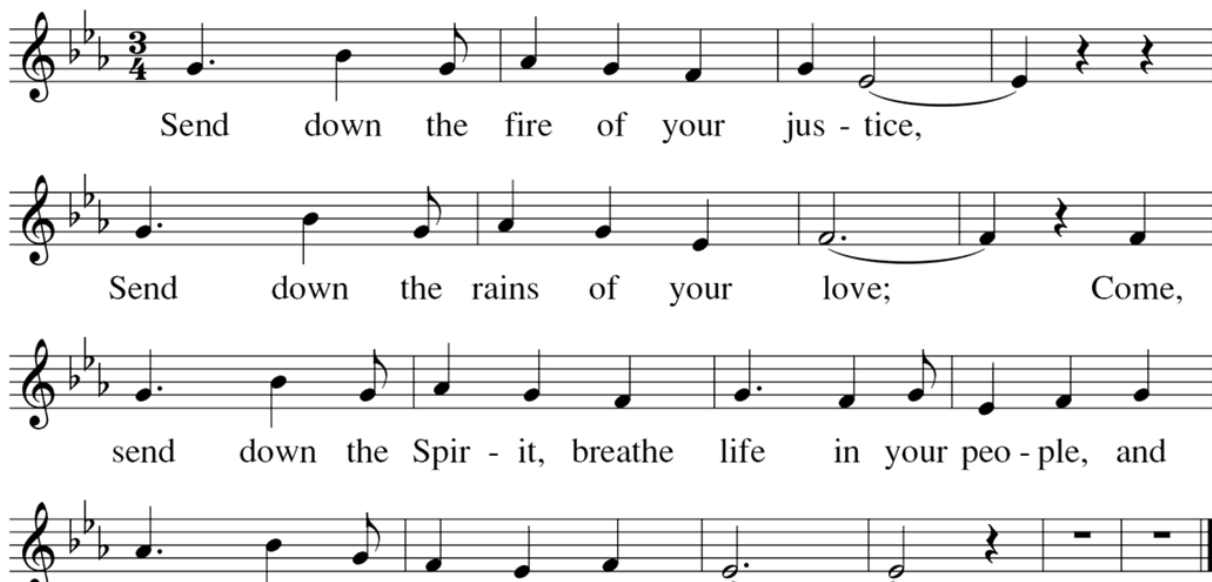
P: **And hearts ready to receive your grace.**

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

***HYMN**

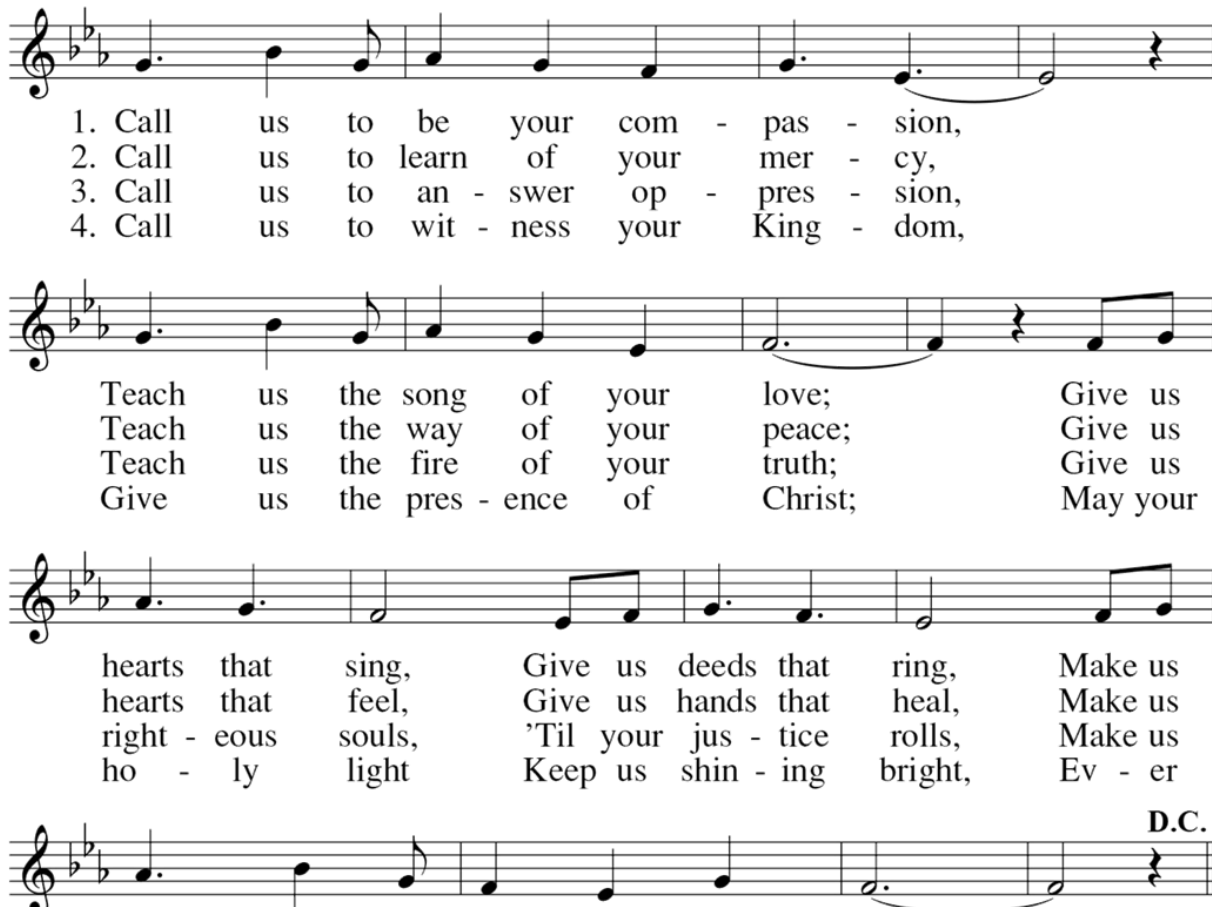
Send Down the Fire

Refrain



Send down the fire of your jus - tice,
 Send down the rains of your love; Come,
 send down the Spir - it, breathe life in your peo - ple, and
 we shall be peo - ple of God.

Verses



1. Call us to be your com - pas - sion,
 2. Call us to learn of your mer - cy,
 3. Call us to an - swer op - pres - sion,
 4. Call us to wit - ness your King - dom,

Teach us the song of your love; Give us
 Teach us the way of your peace; Give us
 Teach us the fire of your truth; Give us
 Give us the pres - ence of Christ; May your

hearts that sing, Give us deeds that ring, Make us
 hearts that feel, Give us hands that heal, Make us
 right - eous souls, 'Til your jus - tice rolls, Make us
 ho - ly light Keep us shin - ing bright, Ev - er

ring with the song of your love.
 walk in the way of your peace.
 burn with the fire of your truth.
 shine with the pres - ence of Christ.

D.C.

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Gracious God, we speak easily of love, mercy, and forgiveness,

P: **but too often our hearts tell another story.**

L: We remember old wounds. We keep score.

P: **We hold tightly to resentment and find it easier to receive grace than to offer it.**

All: **Forgive us, O God. Soften what has grown hard within us. Heal what remains wounded. Help us receive your mercy so deeply that it changes the way we see ourselves and the way we see one another. Create in us clean hearts, open hearts, grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Hear the good news: God's mercy is greater than our failures,

P: **God's grace is deeper than our wounds,**

L: And God's love is stronger than all that separates us from one another.

All: **In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. 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 (Sung twice)

Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah

Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Hallelujah, Hal-le-lu-jah

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Colossians 3:12-15

PSALM 103:1-8 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R

The Lord is my light and my sal - va - tion, of

whom should I be a - fraid, of whom should I be a - fraid?

L: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.

- P: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all God's benefits - who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**
- L: The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. God made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.**
- P: The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. R**

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 shines 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:

You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

Blue #705

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain (Unison)

The musical notation is for a unison refrain in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a key signature of one flat (F major) and a common time signature. The melody starts on G4, moves to A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F#6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F#7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F#8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F#9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F#10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F#11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F#12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F#13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F#14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F#15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F#16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F#17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F#18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F#19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F#20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F#21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F#22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F#23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F#24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F#25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F#26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F#27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F#28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F#29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F#30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F#31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F#32, 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*HYMN

Change My Heart, O God

Blue #373

(Choir sings once, all sing together a second time)

*STATEMENT OF FAITH (from a morning prayer liturgy at Eastern Mennonite Seminary)

We believe in God:

Whose love is the source of all life and the desire of our lives,
Whose love was given a human face in Jesus of Nazareth,
Whose love was crucified by the evil that waits to enslave us all,
And whose love, defeating even death, is our glorious promise of
freedom.

Therefore, though we are sometimes fearful and full of doubt, in God we trust; And
in the name of Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves in the service of others,
To seek justice and to live in peace,
To care for the earth and to share the commonwealth of God's goodness,
To live in the freedom of forgiveness and the power of the spirit of love,
and in the company of the faithful, so to be the church for the glory of
God. 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.

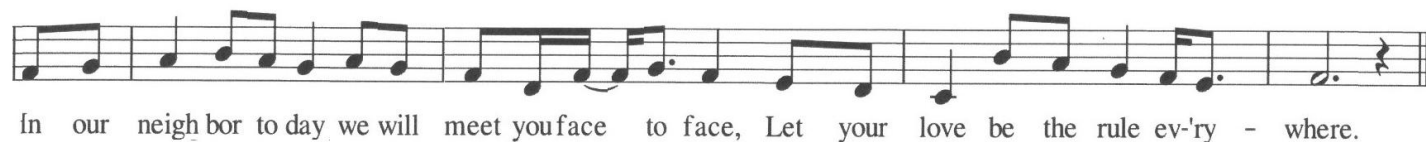
GATHERING OUR GIFTS – Chancel Choir

Upon This Rock

Arr. by Pepper Choplin



*OFFERTORY



*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Generous God, all that we have and all that we are come from you. Receive these gifts as signs of grateful hearts. Take not only what we place in the offering, but our lives as well. Use our gifts, our time, our compassion, and our love to bring hope and healing to your world. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN *Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart* Blue #113

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Tom Oscanyan
Deacons: Becky Pajac, Ann Nelson,
Melissa Oscanyan
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Louie Filkins
Coffee
Fellowship: Christian Ed
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>Sept 6, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 1,262	\$ 396,908
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 407,088

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), 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 THIS 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 Schools 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:

- As we approach the 25th anniversary of the 9-11 attacks, we remember the victims, honor first responders and pray that the peace of Christ may transform our hearts and world
- 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 139,968 meals packed at the Feed My Starving Children event held here in River Falls this past week, may it bring life and hope to those who receive this food and to us
- For the Rev. Bob Wang who began this past 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
- As the mowing season slowly comes to an end, we thank this year's church Mowing Team (Mark and Laura Anderson, Roger Kapping, Lee Lueck and Randy Welsh) for all their hard and hot work this past summer!
- For our Garden Geeks who tend our church garden and 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 the family of Galen Matzek (brother of Sue Danielson) who died peacefully this past week, may he join the saints in light
- 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), may his family grieve in hope
- For the family of Terry Mills, father of Tim Mills, who died recently, may his family be comforted
- For the families of Kathy Deiss, 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!

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: Please join us on Sunday mornings to discuss the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets from **9:00–9:50** in the Youth Room. 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 22 & Oct 13**.

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 Days are **Sept 20 and Oct 18 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

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.

Relax with Rose - Breathwork Techniques: **Thursday, October 29, from 6:30-7:45 pm in the Fellowship Hall** - Learn and practice several different breathwork techniques. These quick techniques will help you step back and relax in a stressful moment or reduce your racing thoughts so you can fall asleep faster. For more information, contact Rose Rude at 715-781-7032 or rar651@gmail.com. Please sign up at church or online.

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 **TODAY**. 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 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.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Colossians 3:12-15

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

River Falls Feed My
Starving Children
Event 2026

139,968 meals
packed.
Thank you!

