

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin
September 27, 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 27, 2026

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 am

Gathering

“Faith without works is dead.” - James 2:17

“Pray as if everything depended upon God. Work as if everything depended upon you.”
- St Ignatius of Loyola

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: God calls us to follow—not only with our words, but with our lives.

P: **We come ready to listen and respond.**

L: Jesus shows us God’s way of love, mercy, and service.

P: **We come ready to put our faith into action.**

L: Come let us worship the God who fills our hearts, opens our minds, and guides our hands.

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

***HYMN**

Here I Am, Lord

Blue #559

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious God, **we often say the right things with our lips but often struggle to follow through with our lives. We promise to love our neighbors, yet turn away from their needs. We speak of forgiveness, yet hold tightly to old hurts. We say that we will follow in the way of Jesus, yet when that proves difficult we turn away. Forgive us, God. Change our words into actions and guide our hands in your ways of love. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Hear the good news: God's grace is greater than our failures.

P: **God gives us new opportunities to turn around, begin again, and walk in God's way.**

L: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven, renewed, and called to lives of love and service.

P: **Thanks be to God.**

L: May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

P: **And also with you.**

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

***GLORIA**

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

Philippians 2:1-5

PSALM 25:1-9 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*

L: To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

P: **O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.**

L: Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

P: **Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**

L: Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

P: **Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.**

L: Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

P: **Good and upright is the LORD; therefore God instructs sinners in the way, leading the humble in what is right, and teaching the humble God's way. 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: Jesus said: "Follow me." Here at this table, we are reminded of our call to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ.
- P: **We follow him when we do the things he calls us to do: love and serve, bless and welcome.**
- L: We follow him when we trust he is present here at this table and will equip us with the Holy Spirit to do the things he calls us to do.
- P: **Come let us gather around his table to share the bread of life and cup of blessing.**

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:

Majestic Mystery - Pastor Bob Wang

Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness - Blue #326

When the Poor Ones - Blue #624

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.**

Proclaiming the Word

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Chris Myers

SONG (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)

*Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.
Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.
Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory;
Children of the Lord.*

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 21:23-32

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love

Blue #273

***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.

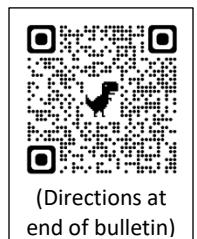
GATHERING OUR GIFTS – Jubilee Ringers

*Great Joy, Quiet Trust
arr. Engle*

***OFFERTORY**

We Give Thee But Thine Own

*We give thee but thine own, whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone a trust, O Lord, from thee.*



*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Generous God, receive these gifts and use them to bring hope, healing, and help to others. Take not only what we place in the offering, but also our time, our abilities, and the work of our hands. May all that we give and all that we do share your love with the world. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve

1 The Spir - it sends us forth to serve; we go in
2 We go to com - fort those who mourn and set the
3 We go to be the hands of Christ, to scat - ter
4 Then let us go to serve in peace, the gos - pel

Je - sus' name to bring glad tid - ings
bur - dened free; where hope is dim, to
joy to like seed and, all our days, to
to pro - claim. God's Spir - it has em -

to share the poor, God's fa - vor to pro - claim.
share a dream and help the blind to see.
cher - ish life, to do the lov - ing deed.
pow - ered us; we go in Je - sus' name.

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Jean Smith
Deacons: Becky Pajac, Heidi Cavaness,
Liz Swank, Paul Shepherd,
Steve Koecher
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Trustee: Andy Krueger
Welcomers: Jan Johnson
Coffee
Fellowship: Diane Olson
Counters: Jean Smith, Evelyn Purdy
*Altar table flowers are given by Steve and
Lara Koecher in memory of Steve's dad,
Arlyn Koecher.*

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Christopher Myers
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers
Community &
Outreach Pastor: Bob Wang
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 20, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 4,991	\$ 418,479
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 429,704

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), 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), Samantha Church (granddaughter of Duane Church), Eunice Filkins, Linda Morrow

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- As the program year begins, we pray for our church leaders, Moderator Marie Roe and Vice Moderator, Louie Filkins, for our Church Council and all new committee members, may we better live into our mission statement to love God and serve others, everybody is welcome because everybody matters
- For our 15 Sunday School teachers and for Chris, Stacy and Alex who lead confirmation, church interns and youth group, may we all have a fun and faith filled year
- For those who will receive College Packs this fall, may they bring God's love close to them
- For the return of Wednesday Night Family Meals (yay!) may we all be fed
- For the Side by Side Choir which began practicing in our Fellowship Hall recently connecting community members and those with dementia through the gift of music and song, may their joy grow

Prayers for our World:

- 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 Matt Danielson (son of Mike & Sue) who married Brad Devore in their backyard on Saturday, September 12, may their future be bright and joyful
- For Hallah Jensen (daughter of Michelle & Neal) and Andrew Cariveau, and Glory Etzel and Nathan Lawrence (son of Linn & Tim) who were recently married, may they continue to grow in love
- For the 139,968 meals packed at the Feed My Starving Children event held here in River Falls recently, may it bring life and hope to those who receive this food and to us
- For Darlene Sumption and Lloyd Wood who both celebrated their 100th birthdays recently, you are an inspiration!
- 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 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-Jenson on September 16 and Glenn Hansen on October 17, may their memory continue to inspire us
- For the families of Jeff Healy (brother of Steve Healy), Terry Mills (father of Tim Mills), Galen Matzek (brother of Sue Danielson), Kathy Deiss (aunt of Ann Nelson), Robert (Bob) Peterson (brother of Larry Peterson), 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 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 group is discussing Revelation. Copies of the book are available in the church office for \$20. The group meets in the library on **Wednesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday School Volunteers Needed: Wednesday School begins on **October 7**. We need volunteers to provide snacks on a rotating basis. Please sign the list on the sign-up table or volunteer on the website.

Loving Neighbor

Back Bay Mission Trip Planned for April 2027: Ever wanted to go on a mission trip? Heard about the awesome experiences so many of our church folks have had at UCC related Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi? Join us! Our church is sponsoring yet another trip to Back Bay Mission, **April 18-24, 2027**. **An information meeting will be held on Sun, Oct 4, following worship.** Please contact Carol Merriman or Pastor Chris for details. Use the sign-up sheet to register your interest.

Basics for Local Kids (BLK): BLK is a non-profit organization that provides winter-wear to local kids in need from infant to 18 years old. Please consider making a donation of gently used or new coats, snow pants, boots, hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, or socks. Donations can be placed in the bin. Beginning in October volunteers are needed to help families shop or to sort & restock items. To volunteer go to www.BasicsforLocalKids.org or call Kim Johnson at 715-821-1623. Thank you for your generous, continuing support. Other questions contact Renee Whipple 715-307-5074.

Journey House: (Ecumenical young adult outreach) 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; **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](#).

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 & female), belts, adult socks, good buys.

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 Volunteers Needed: The program meets two days a week and has 12 active guests. Training is provided & the rewards are phenomenal! Contact them at amongfriendsrf@gmail.com

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.

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

Inquirer's Class: New to church? Want to know more about our life and ministry? Join us on **Tues, Oct 27 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. At this 90-minute gathering, you will meet church leaders, other new folks and learn more about First Congregational Church. Dessert and childcare are provided. Please sign up at church.

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 29 & Oct 13**.

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 **Oct 13 & 27**.

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, Oct 21 at 1:00 pm at Juniors in River Falls**. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

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 date is **Oct 18 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

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.

Wednesday Meals Resume on Oct 7: On Wednesday nights, we offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$9 per person with a family max of \$30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:00 pm**. You can get your meal to go if you go through the line (indicate when you sign up). **Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays**. You can make a reservation online, the sign-up table or by calling the church office. The menu for Oct 7 is: Taco bar.

Preschool Screening: The School District of River Falls is hosting a free preschool screening on **Fri, Oct 23**. This is designed for families who live within district boundaries & have concerns about some aspect of their 2-1/2 to 5 year old child's development. For more info, contact Ann Nelson at 715-425-1819 ext. 3101 or ann.nelson@rfsd.k12.wi.us.

Fall Clean-Up, Sat, Oct 24, 9:00 am: Please bring your gloves, rakes, blowers, pruning shears, etc. to help clean up the grounds at the church. Back-up date is Sat, Oct 31 Please sign up and join us!

Relax with Rose - Breathwork Techniques: **Thurs, Oct 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 info, contact Rose Rude at 715-781-7032 or rar651@gmail.com. Please sign up at church or online.

Side by Side Choir: For those 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 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 have start 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

Learning Community: Tues, Oct 13 at 6:30 pm: A Night in the National Parks! - Ever wanted to visit 3 of our most famous national parks: Tetons, Yellowstone & Glacier? Join Pastor Chris as he leads us on a tour of three of our nation's most outstanding national parks. He will talk about both the beauty & grandeur of the parks as well as practical logistical things - where to stay, what to do & most important, how far out to plan & book! Sign up & join us, dessert will be served.

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

College Pack Items Needed! One of the mission activities of the church youth program is to send College Packs to those off at school or the military. We ask each of our 6-12th grade families to bring items for the 30 college packs. Think necessary items, fun items & lightweight items! Food is always good. So are dorms decs. **Please bring them by Sun, Oct 4.**

Bibles for 6th Graders: The congregation will present Bibles to six grade students during worship on **Oct 11**.

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 Oct 7.** Please contact Pastor Stacy with questions.



GLACIER

YELLOWSTONE

GRAND TETON

A LEARNING COMMUNITY

NATIONAL PARKS

Glacier • Yellowstone • Grand Teton

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13

6:30-8:00 PM

Learn how to plan your trip and discover
what to see and do. Already visited?
Come share your tips and favorite experiences!

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

110 North Third Street
River Falls, WI 54022
www.firstchurchrf.org

All are welcome!

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Philippians 2:1-5

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 21:23-32

When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?' Jesus said to them, 'I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?' And they argued with one another, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "Of human origin", we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.' So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

'What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not"; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, "I go, sir"; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

Middle & High School Youth Groups have started. Talk to Alex Plum for more information.

