

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin
October 18, 2026**



**The Great Tower of Babel
by Pieter Bruegel the Elder c. 1563**

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

October 18, 2026

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

10:00 am

Gathering

I cannot do all the good the world needs, but the world needs all the good I can do.
Jana Stafield, singer-songwriter

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: We gather in the name of God who made us and loves us.

P: **We come to remember our call to be God's people at work in the world today.**

L: We bring different voices, different stories, and different gifts.

P: **And yet God somehow makes us all one in the body of Christ.**

L: Come let us offer our hearts and minds and lives to God.

P: **Come let us be God's people growing in faith.**

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

***HYMN**

Rain Down

Blue #444

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious God, **we confess that we sometimes care more about making name for ourselves than honoring yours. We measure our worth by success, possessions, and what others think of us. We speak without listening and expect others to see things our way. Forgive us. Free us from the need to prove ourselves. Teach us to welcome our differences, serve our neighbors, and trust your love. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Friends, hear the good news: God knows us fully and loves us freely.

P: **We do not have to earn our place in God's family or prove our worth.**

L: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and given a new beginning.

P: **Let us receive God's grace and share that grace with one another.**

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

Alleluia! Give the Glory

Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia!

Al-le - lu - ia! Give the glo-ry

1 and the hon-or to the Lord!

2 and the hon-or to the Lord!

Hearing the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 22:15-22

PSALM 96 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

Response *Unison* *Antiphon: Marty Haugen, 1994*

Make a joy-ful noise, a joy-ful noise, un-to God, all the earth.

L: O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

P: **Sing to the LORD, bless God's name; tell of God's salvation from day to day.**

- L: Declare God's glory among the nations, God's marvelous works among all the peoples.
- P: **For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised and to be revered above all gods.**
- L: For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. Honor and majesty are there; strength and beauty are in God's sanctuary.
- P: **Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.**
- L: Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name; bring an offering, and come into the courts of God.
- P: **Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble all the earth.**
- L: Say among the nations, 'The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. God will judge the peoples with equity.'
- P: **Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it.**
- L: Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD; for God is coming and will judge the earth.
- P: **God will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with truth. 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 came to seek out the lost and lonely.
- P: **Come Lord Jesus, come to us we pray.**
- L: He came with healing in his hands, love in his heart and peace in his wake.
- P: **Come Holy Spirit, come to us we pray.**
- L: He came proclaiming God's kingdom is coming and yet is also here among us.
- P: **Come God, come to us we pray.**
- All: **Come let us be a part of God's Way here and now as we eat and drink at your table.**

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:

Seed, Scattered and Sown

Congregation join on refrain:

***Seed, scattered and sown, wheat, gathered and grown,
bread, broken and shared as one, the Living Bread of God.***

***Vine, fruit of the land, wine, work of our hands, one cup that is shared by all;
the Living Cup, the Living Bread of God.***

I Am the Bread of Life

Blue #703

One Bread, One Body

Blue 689

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.)

Jesus loves the little children, All the children of the world.

Every color, every race, all are covered by His grace.

Jesus loves the little children of the world.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Genesis 11:1-9

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – from the Iona Ecumenical Community in Scotland**

L: Let us affirm our faith.

P: We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of the One God, maker and sustainer of earth, sea and sky. Born of Mary, faithful to the God of Abraham and Sarah, Jesus healed the sick, served the poor, and proclaimed heaven on earth. Condemned by the religious, crucified by the state, He died but transformed even death and rose to life everlasting. He blessed the disciples with his Holy Spirit and sent them forth, east and west, north and south. We commit ourselves to Jesus, to one another as brothers and sisters and to the grace of the Holy Spirit. 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.

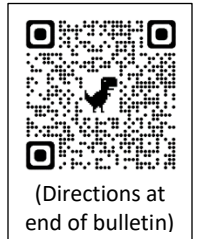
DISCIPLESHIP MOMENT

Stu Henning

GATHERING OUR GIFTS – Jubilee Ringers

Variations on "Holy, Holy, Holy"

arr. Steele



***OFFERTORY**

We Praise You, O God

Blue #726

***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**

Generous God, all that we have and all that we are come from you. Receive these gifts as an expression of our gratitude and trust. Use them to build a community where people are welcomed, needs are met, and your love is shared. Guide us to honor you with our money, our time, and our lives. Amen.

***HYMN**

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Blue #496

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
 Celebrant: Bob Wang
 Cantor: David Reilly
 Liturgist: Traci Hagberg
 Deacons: Becky Pajac
 Organist: Terry Mithun
 Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
 Nursery: Kahla Fuller
 Trustee: Scott Nelson
 Welcomers: Deb Hoffman
 Coffee
 Fellowship: Men's Group – St. B's Donuts
 Counters: Vicki Sippel, Dennis Linder
Altar table flowers are given by Traci Hagberg in memory of Ted & Jean Hagberg's 68th wedding anniversary.

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>Oct 11, 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 4,854	\$ 426,652
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 463,628

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), Nolan, Kelly (sister-in-law of Cindy Gandrud), Jill (daughter of JoAnn Mathews), Dave Woeste, Joan Hyland, Samantha Church (granddaughter of Duane Church), Bernie (brother of Becky Pajac), Kevin (son-in-law of Pat Anderson), Helen Stoltz-Wood, Faye (friend of Helen Stoltz-Wood)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those who will join us for the next Inquirer's Class on Tuesday, October 27th, may it help folks learn more about our life and ministry as a congregation
- For our trustees and their helpers getting our church grounds ready for winter on Saturday, October 24th, God bless you and your work!
- For those who will receive College Packs this fall, may they bring God's love close to them
- For those preparing for the November 15th Giving Thanks Meal, may it help us feed on gratitude
- For those who participated in the Learning Community on National Parks this past week and for those who will join us for the next one on November 10th on the Churches of River Falls lead by Mark Anderson, may these help us grow
- As we approach All Saints Sunday on Sunday, November 1st, we remember all those who have died this past year and those who have returned to the church Memorial Garden as we dedicate a plaque with their names, may we remember them with gratitude

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, Israel, Gaza and Ukraine

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For those who were at Moon Beach Camp recently getting our church camp ready for fall and winter – Jane W, Lu L, Norma R, Tim B, Carol M and Dan R - thank you for your work!
- For Alyssa Larsen (daughter of Joel and Tanya) and Jaron Duitsman to be married on October 31 in Maiden Rock, WI with pastor Chris officiating (yes, they are getting married on Halloween!)
- For Darlene Sumption and Lloyd Wood who both celebrated their 100th birthdays recently, you are inspirations!
- For those who will give blood at our next blood drive on Wednesday, November 25th (the day before Thanksgiving), may it be a time of true thanksgiving and may it bring life to others

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For Charlotte Fiedler Eaton (sister of Barb Mahoney) who died at 98 recently, may we give thanks for her life
- For Neil Williams (father of Shelly Killian) who died recently and whose Celebration of Life was last Tuesday, may they mourn in hope
- For those 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 families of Connie Pajac (sister of Jeff Pajac), Jeff Healy (brother of Steve Healy), Terry Mills (father of Tim Mills), Galen Matzek (brother of Sue Danielson), 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.

Sunday, October 18, 2026

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

Christmas Shoebox: We wanted to remind you of this project for the gentlemen at Kinnic Falls Alcohol & Drug Abuse Center so when you see the items we have listed, you can grab a couple & before we know it, our list will be complete. If you would rather donate cash, put Christmas Shoebox in the memo line and we will make sure all items are purchased. Thanks to all of you, we are making a difference. The list is on the gathering table.

Basics for Local Kids (BLK): BLK is a non-profit organization that provides winterwear 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. 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 is Hosting a Discover Night – Thurs, Oct 22, 6:00 pm: This is a great opportunity for anyone to get to know Journey House a little more. Also, remember, if you have any donations you'd like to give young adults that are transitioning into their own journey, there is always a Journey House bin in the gathering area.

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**. Please contact Carol Merriman or Pastor Chris for details. Use the sign-up sheet to register your interest.

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: 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 **Oct 27 & Nov 10**.

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 27 & Nov 10**.

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 **TODAY 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

Wednesday Meals: 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, at church or by calling the church office. We also need people to sign up to help clean up. The menu for Oct 21 is beef stroganoff, noodles, salad, and bread.

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, 6:30-7:45 pm** - 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.

Learning Community: **Tues, Nov 10 at 6:30 pm: The Churches of River Falls** – This event will focus on churches in River Falls. Why? Well, churches, like old houses, barns, gas stations, and train stations, are intriguing. They were built with vision, determination, and hope. As time marched on some church buildings were lost to fire or storms. Some were remodeled, moved, or repurposed. Congregation member Mark Anderson will show slides of the early churches of River Falls and what became of them. He will share a few stories, artifacts, and memories with the slides. If you have pictures or artifacts to share, please bring them along! Please sign up at church or online.

Giving Thanks Meal: The Annual Giving Thanks Meal will be **Sun, Nov 15**, after the worship service in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$10 per meal. Join us for a home-cooked Thanksgiving meal as we kick off the season of giving thanks. Please include your pie choice of pumpkin or apple and let us know if you will bring a side dish. Sign up by Nov 11.

Red Cross Blood Drive: The next Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church is on **Wed, Nov 25, from 11:00 am to 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 an appointment.

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 **Mondays at 10:00 am** for our fall season. Rehearsals 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

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.

The background of the entire poster is a light cream color, framed by a decorative border of autumn-themed illustrations. This border includes various styles of leaves in shades of yellow, orange, and brown, as well as small, five-petaled flowers. The main title is centered in a large, bold, brown serif font.

GIVING THANKS MEAL

Hosted by First Congregational Church

Join us for a warm meal and grateful hearts!

**Celebrate God's goodness and the blessings of community
as we share food, fellowship and thanksgiving together.**

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15

10:00 AM WORSHIP

11:00 AM MEAL

**All are welcome – bring family,
friends and neighbors!**

Sign up by Sunday, November 11



GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 22:15-22

Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Genesis 11:1-9

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.' The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the LORD said, 'Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.