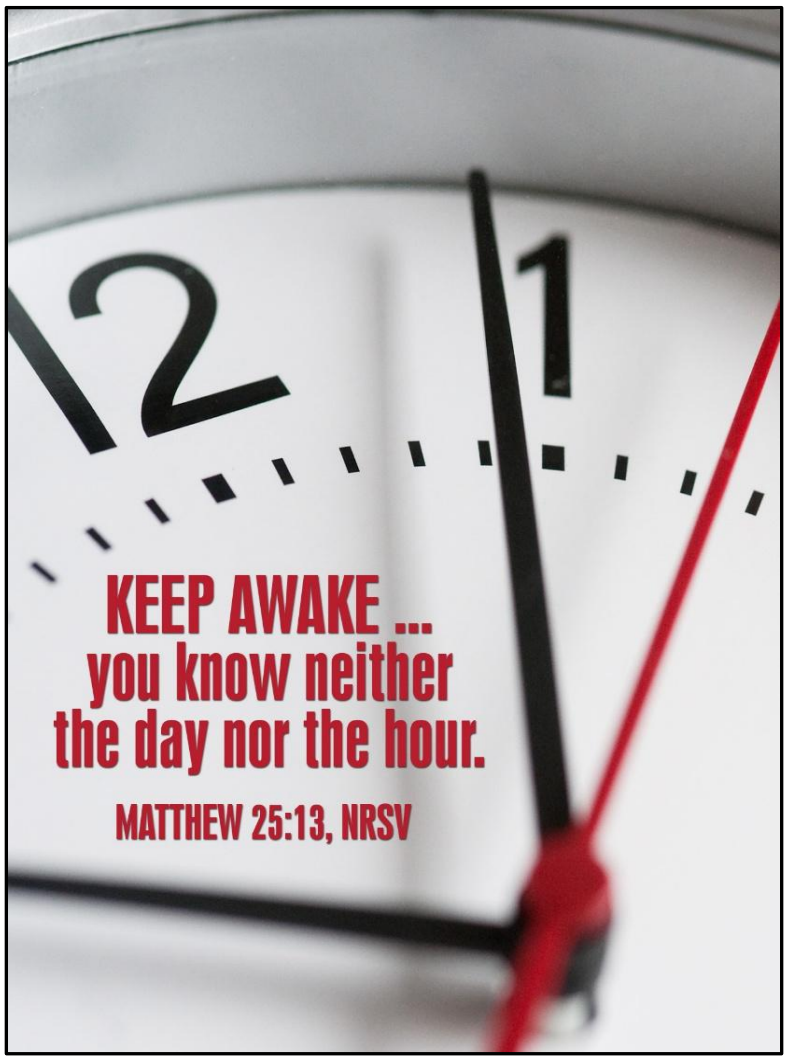
First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin

November 8, 2026



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

November 8, 2026 *Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost* 10:00 am

Gathering

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.
- 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.**

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: We gather this morning as the people of God.
P: We gather together with praise and thanksgiving.
L: As God breathed life into creation,
P: Let the Holy Spirit breathe new life into us.
L: Open our ears to hear your Word;
P: Open our hearts that we would be shaped by your Word.
All: Come let us worship the God who leads us into life!

HYMN** ***Shine, Jesus, Shine **Blue #319**

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Almighty God, **in love you spread good gifts before us, more than we need. You feed, heal, teach, and save us. Yet we confess that we always want more. We struggle to share as freely as you give and grow jealous of neighbors. Forgive us. In your mercy, change our hearts and help us to live in your way of peace and justice. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: God knows us, loves us yet refuses to leave us where we are.

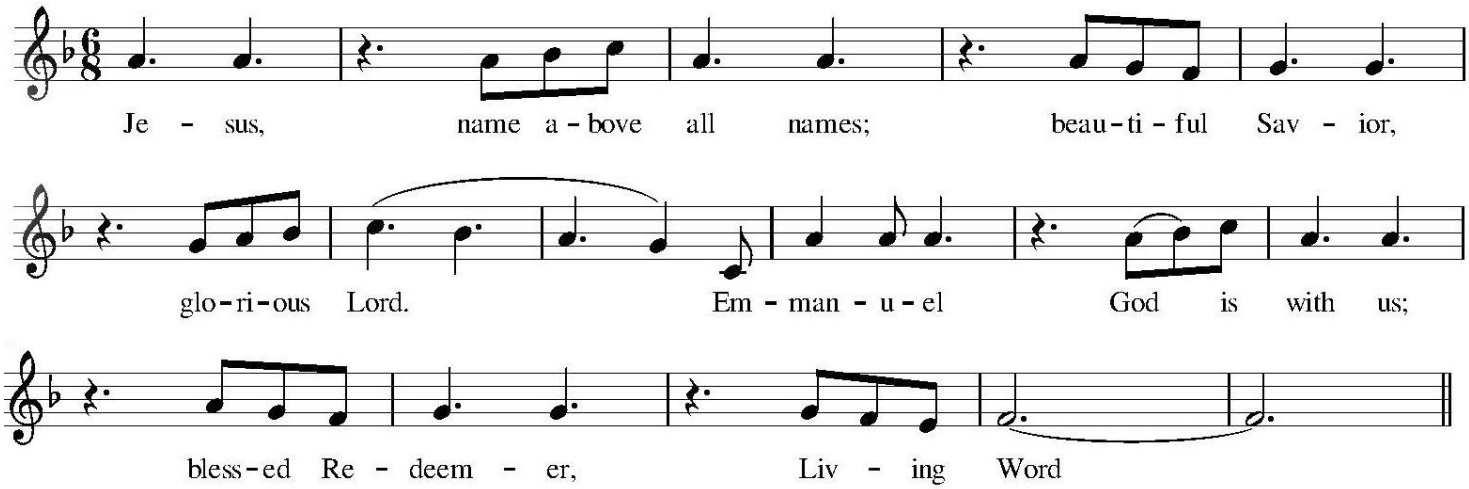
P: Let us receive the forgiveness God offers and be at peace with God, neighbor and ourselves.

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** ***Jesus, Name Above All Names **(Sung twice)**

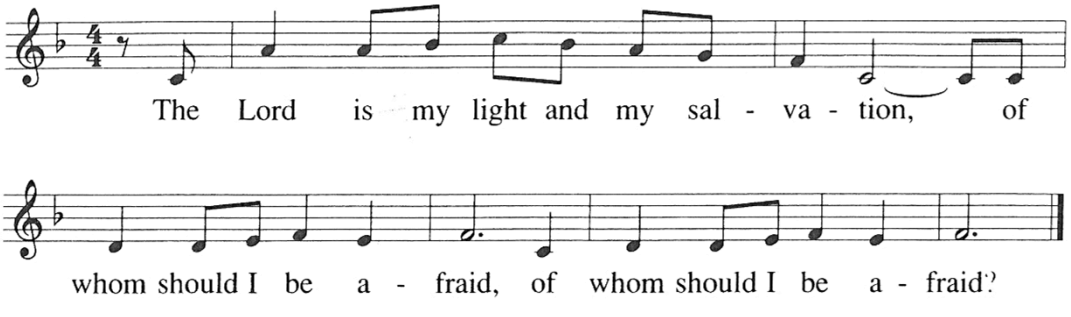


Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

PSALM 78:1-7 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



L: Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

P: I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us.

L: We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

P: God established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep God's commandments. *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: Sisters and Brothers in Christ, this is the table where our Savior Jesus Christ wants to feed us on the bread of life. Let us feast on his grace that forgives us. Let us feast on his peace that calms us. Let us feast on his love that frees us. Come just as you are and be fed by him.

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
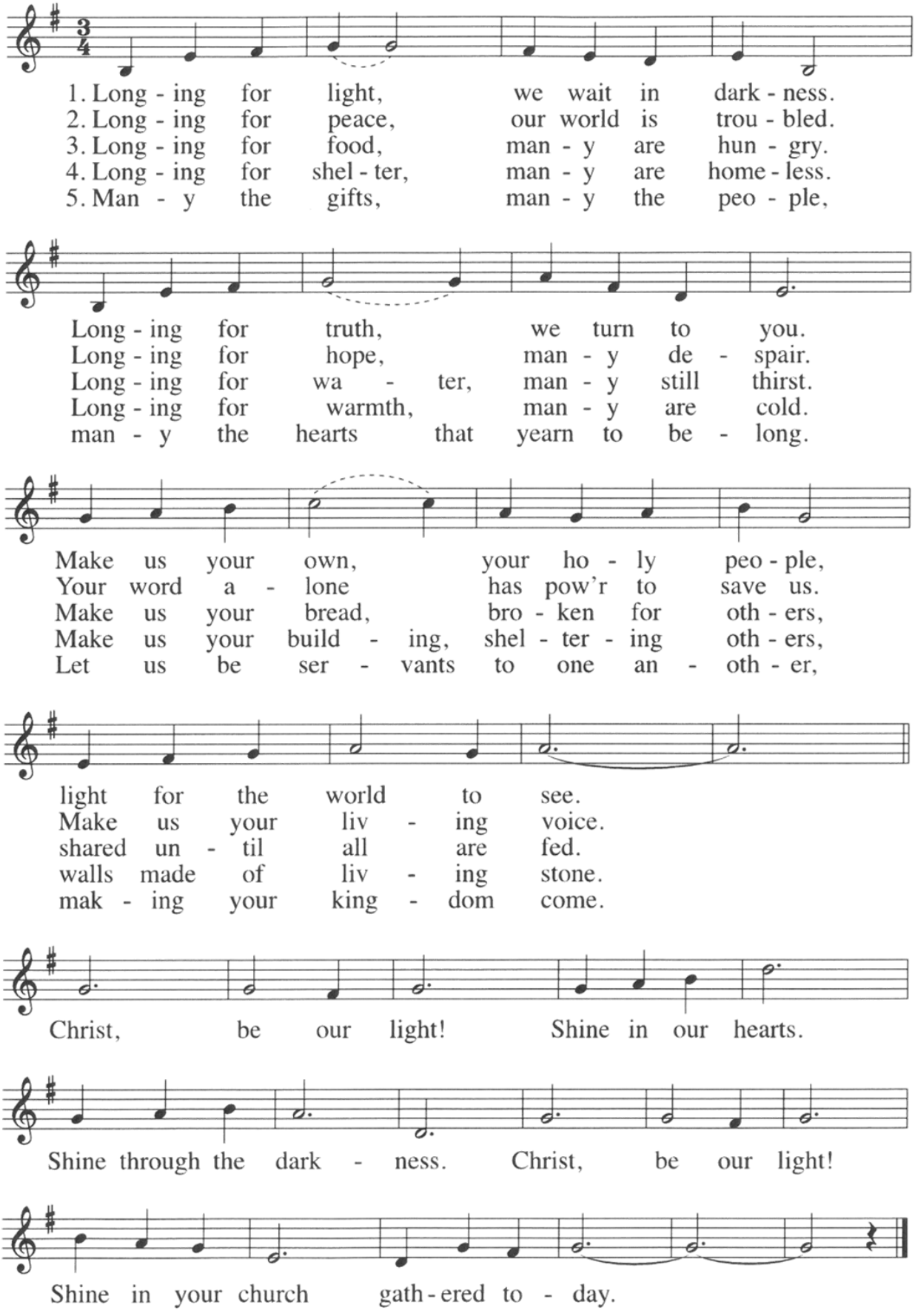
Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

I Am the Light of the World
Black #584

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
Blue #248

Christ, Be Our Light



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.)

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

GOSPEL LESSON **Matthew 25:1-13**

SERMON **"The Battle Between Dark and Light"** **Rev. Bob Wang**

SONG** ***Salt and Light

(By Amy Grant and Wes King)

We all need a little salt, need a little light,
need a hopeful word shining bright.
We can be a little salt, be a little light,
in this darkened world
we can shine, oh, oh, shine so bright,
shine, oh, oh, just like the starlight,
shine, oh, oh, shine,
shine, oh, oh, shine the light.

***STATEMENT OF FAITH (World Council of Churches)**

I believe in the living God, the Maker of all humankind who creates and sustains the universe in power and in love.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God incarnate on earth, who showed us by his words and work, suffering with others, conquest of death, what human life ought to be and what God is like.

I believe that the Spirit of God is present with us now and always, and can be experienced in prayer, in forgiveness, in the Word, the Sacraments, the community of the Church and all that we do. 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 **Alex Plum**

GATHERING OUR GIFTS – Rev. Bob Wang

(Directions at end of bulletin)

Let There Be Love

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**

Gracious God, **some give joyfully, others reluctantly. Some give out of much, others have little. Some give because they have caught sight of a vision – or a vision has caught sign of them. These are our gifts, O God, given for reasons both noble and ordinary. Accept them. Bless them. Use them for Your glory and honor. Amen.**

Sending

***HYMN & BLESSING**

I am sending you light to heal you, to hold you.
I am sending you light to hold you in love.
(Repeat)

POSTLUDE

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

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher:	Bob Wang
Celebrant:	Chris Myers
Cantor:	David Reilly
Liturgist:	Rebecca Ferguson
Deacons:	Melissa Oscanyan, Becky Pajac, Kathy Rausch, Liz Swank, Kam Ross
Organist:	Marsha Pearson
Live Stream:	Jeff Hoffman
Nursery:	Kahla Fuller
Trustee:	Mike Danielson
Welcomers:	Deb Hoffman, Arlene Johnson
Coffee Fellowship:	Discipleship Team
Counters:	Jean Smith, Tom Oscanyan

Altar table flowers are given by Lillian Tan in memory of her parents' 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

	Nov 1, 2026	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	$ 6,580	$ 475,248
General Fund Operational Needs	$ 11,308	$ 497,552

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 Morrissette, Nathaniel (friend of the Kruegers), Bruce (father of Melissa Oscanyan), Ryan Cottrell (friend of the Koechers), Diana (friend of Janice Healy), Kelly (sister-in-law of Cindy Gandrud), Dave Woeste, Joan Hyland, Samantha Church (granddaughter of Duane Church), Kevin (son-in-law of Pat Anderson), Helen Stoltz-Wood, Diane Olsen and Faye (friends of Helen Stoltz-Wood), Mary Yaeger, Sharon Monroe, Logan Kiel, Luca, Cindy and Chris Marek (friends of Sue Simonet), Pat Anderson, Raelle Jorae, Aamon Johnson (nephew of Tanya Larsen), Christina Krueger, Mike Bates

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those who joined us at the Inquirer's Class recently, may it help folks learn more about our life and ministry as a congregation
- For our next Learning Community 'Churches of River Falls' on Tuesday, November 10th at 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall, may we learn more about our community's history
- For those receiving College Packs this fall, may they bring God's love close to them
- For those preparing for and those who will be enjoying the November 15th Giving Thanks Meal, may it help us feed on gratitude
- On All Saints Sunday, November 1st, we remembered all those who have died this past year and those who have been welcomed home to the church Memorial Garden as we dedicated a plaque with their names, may we remember them with gratitude

Prayers for our World:

- For election and poll workers, may they rest from a job well done and receive our gratitude
- 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 veterans, especially those who are homeless or suffering from PTSD, may they be helped
- For stability and peace in Iran, Israel, Gaza and Ukraine

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For the gift of this church and its ministry as we dedicate our financial pledges on Giving Thanks Sunday, November 15th
- For our trustees and their helpers who readied our church grounds ready for winter last weekend, God bless you and your work!
- For the safe arrival of Lainey daughter of Katie Krueger and Hunter Pesik born October 20th, may they all rest and grow in love
- For Alyssa Larsen (daughter of Joel and Tanya) & Jaron Duitsman who were married on October 31 in Maiden Rock, WI with pastor Chris officiating (yes, they got married on Halloween!), may their love continue to grow
- 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 25 (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 the families of Matthew Drinkwine (son of Katy Kapaun our Wednesday Meal Church Cook), Bernie Schmahl (brother of Marilee and Becky Pajac), Lynn Merriman, Neil Williams, Connie Pajac (sister of Jeff Pajac), Jeff Healy (brother of Steve Healy), Terry Mills (father of Tim Mills), 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.

Loving Neighbor

Christmas Shoebox: The drive for donations for Christmas Shoebox items for the gentlemen at Kinnic Falls Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services has begun. If you would rather donate cash, just designate it for the Christmas Shoebox. Donations are due by Dec 10. The list of items needed is on the gathering table.

Sharing Families Giving Tree: The Giving Tree will be available on Sun, Nov 15. The gifts (with the ornaments attached) are due back to the church by noon on Thurs, Dec 10. If you have questions, please contact Diane Welsh at 651-334-3128.

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.

Back Bay Mission Trip - April 2027: Ever wanted to go on a mission trip? Heard about the awesome experience so many of our church folks have had at UCC-related Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi? Join us! Our church is sponsoring 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.

Grace Place Donations: Needed items: 55-gallon garbage bags, 13-gallon garbage bags, paper towels, Kleenex, napkins, Ziploc bags, aluminum foil and plastic wrap, light bulbs, batteries: AA, AAA, and 9-volt, cleaning supplies: Fabuloso, window cleaner, disinfectant wipes, toilet bowl cleaner, toilet bowl brushes, cleaning scrubbers, 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

New Members Received – Sun, Nov 22: New members will be received on **Sun, Nov 22** at the 10:00 am worship service. If you wish to join, please make sure the church office has your information by Sunday, November 15. Please see Missy in the office or Pastor Chris for more information.

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 **Nov 10 & 24.**

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 **Nov 10 & 24.**

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

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, Nov 18 at 1:00 pm at Eunice Filkins' home**. Lunch will be provided. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

Game Day Sunday: Game Day is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next date is **Nov 22 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 Nov 11 is parmesan crusted chicken over rice pilaf, salad, croissant.

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 & let us know if you will bring a side dish. Sign up by Nov 11.

Winter Evergreen Porch Pots – Sun, Nov 22 at 1:00 pm: Come to church to make a winter evergreen porch pot with experts, Laura Anderson and Diane Clark. All needed materials will be provided. If you want a specific pot, bring a one to two-gallon container such as a recycled Christmas popcorn tub. Bring a garden pruner (if you have one) and work gloves are recommended. While you don't need to pay for the materials, please give an offering of $25 which will in turn be given to the River Falls Food Pantry. Space is limited to 12 participants. Please sign up.

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 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 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.

NOVEMBER 8, 2026 (A) GREEN TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 25:1-13

'Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise replied, "No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." But he replied, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you." Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Here are some pictures received from the college packs that were sent out last week.





