First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin

November 29, 2026



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

November 29, 2026 *First Sunday in Advent* 10:00 am

Gathering

At this Christmas season when Christ comes, will he find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving others with God's own love and concern.
- Mother Teresa

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: Come, Lord Jesus!
P: Today we begin the journey of Advent. Let us pray that we may be ready and able to welcome the Christ child into our lives again.
L: May the keeping of Advent be upon our hearts and lives.
P: Come, Lord Jesus!
L: May Advent remind us to prepare for Christ's coming.
P: Come, Lord Jesus!
L: Jesus came to give the world hope. Hope that gave people the courage to go on. Hope that a new and better way of living was possible.
P: Because of our trust in what God has already done for us, we are bold to hope for what God will yet do with us.
All: Come let us worship!

(Light the first Advent candle)

HYMN** ***Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn **Blue #160**
(Verses 1, 2 and 4)

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

O God, **we confess it is easy to be a naysayer rather than a beacon of hope. We regret the times when we have joined a chorus of negativity and despair, rather than a chorus lifting up words of comfort and hope. In this time of looking forward, grant us the grace to look forward with hope. May your hope be lit in our hearts that we might bring hope to those who are living through dark times. We ask this in the name of the child who comes to give hope to all. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Friends, know and believe, that as we wait for the birth of the baby Jesus –

P: And the return of our Savior –

L: God is at work in our world, reconciling us with God and one another. This is good news!

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** ***He Came Down

He came down that we may have love; He came down that we may have love;
He came down that we may have love; hallelujah forever more.

He came down that we may have peace; He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace; hallelujah forever more.

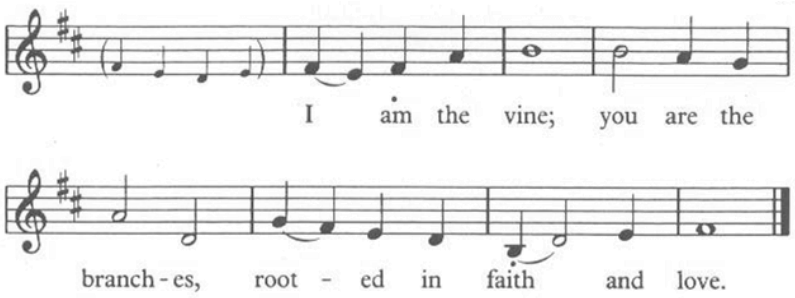
He came down that we may have joy; He came down that we may have joy;
He came down that we may have joy; hallelujah forever more.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON **1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



L: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!

P: You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us!

L: Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

P: O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

L: You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure.

P: You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. *R*

L: Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

P: But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself.

L: Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

P: Restore us, O Lord of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. *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: Brothers and sisters in Christ, as we wait and watch during this Advent season, we pray…

P: Come, O Come, Emmanuel, come and save us.

L: As we transition from a season of giving thanks to a time of preparing for the Messiah's birth, we pray…

P: Come, O Come, Emmanuel, come and save us.

L: As we look for signs of his presence among us yet again, we pray…

P: Come, O Come, Emmanuel, come and save us.

All: So come let us gather at the table of our Lord.

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:

<u>Choose to Hope</u>

Congregation join on refrain:

In the times of darkness, in times of fear, choose to hope,
choose to love, and know that God is near.

<u>Make Me a Channel of Your Peace</u>

Blue #587

Master, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood, as to understand, to be loved, as to love with all my soul.

<u>We Shall Overcome</u>

Congregation join on refrain:

We shall overcome, we shall overcome, we shall overcome some day!
Oh, deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome some day!

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**

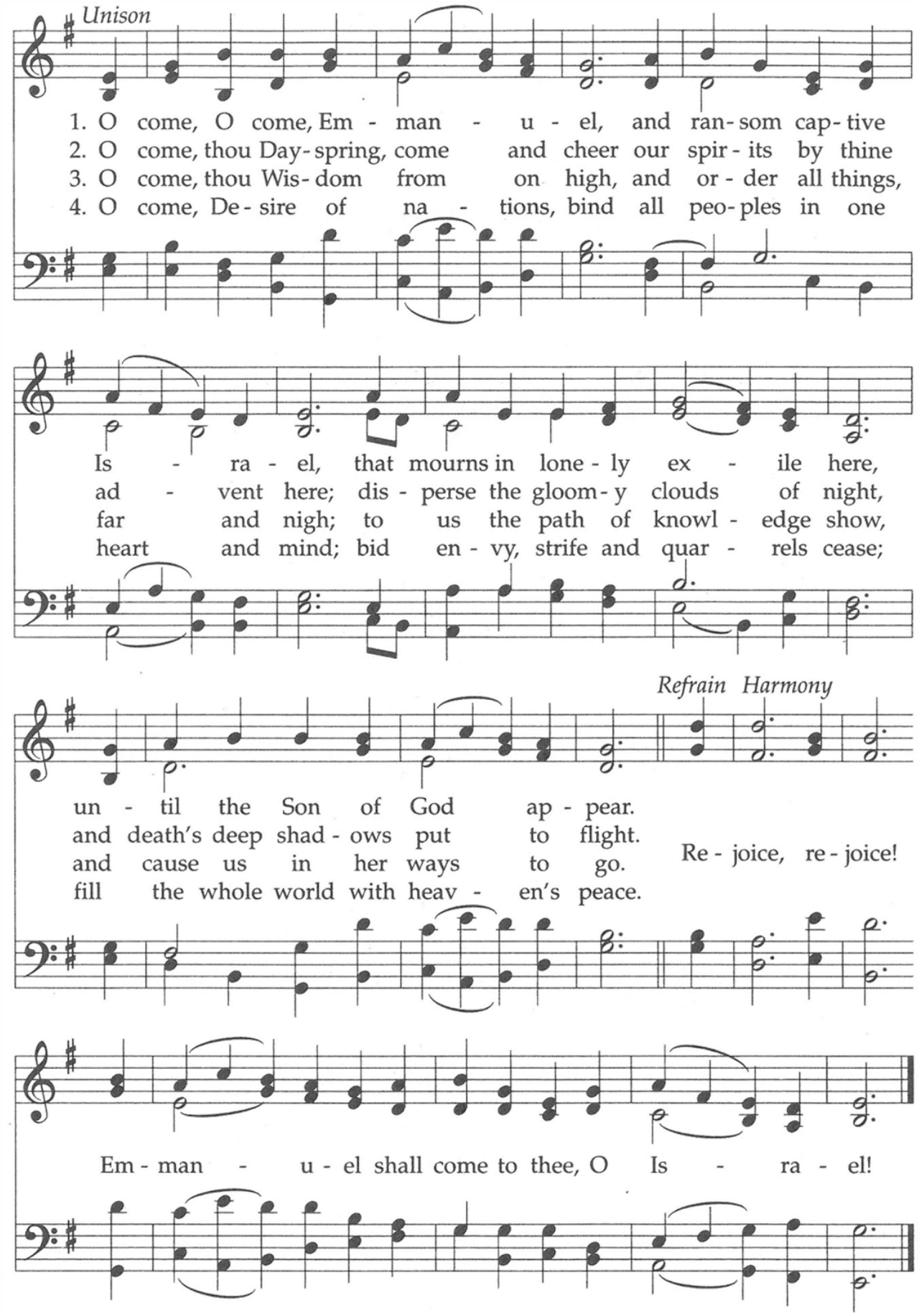
SONG (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)

Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (stomp, stomp).
You do not know the hour when the Lord is coming.
Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (stomp, stomp).
The Lord is coming soon.

GOSPEL LESSON **Mark 13:24-37**

SERMON **Rev. Chris Myers**

HYMN** ***O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



***STATEMENT OF FAITH for Advent**

L: In quietness and darkness, in peace and confusion, Jesus Christ wants to make his home and meet his friends. He is the light of life:

P: He is the hope for the world.

L: In him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant;

P: All are one in Jesus Christ.

L: He is the light of life:

P: He is the hope of the world.

L: In him there is neither black nor white, neither north nor south;

P: All are one in Jesus Christ.

L: He is the light of life:

P: He is the hope of the world.

L: In him there is neither male nor female, neither master nor servant;

P: All are one in Jesus Christ.

L: He is the light of life:

P: He is the hope of the world.

L: He is the light of life:

P: He is the hope of the world. 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 – Deb Hoffman and Sarah Plum

Homeward Bound

arr. Jay Althouse

(Directions at end of bulletin)

***OFFERTORY**

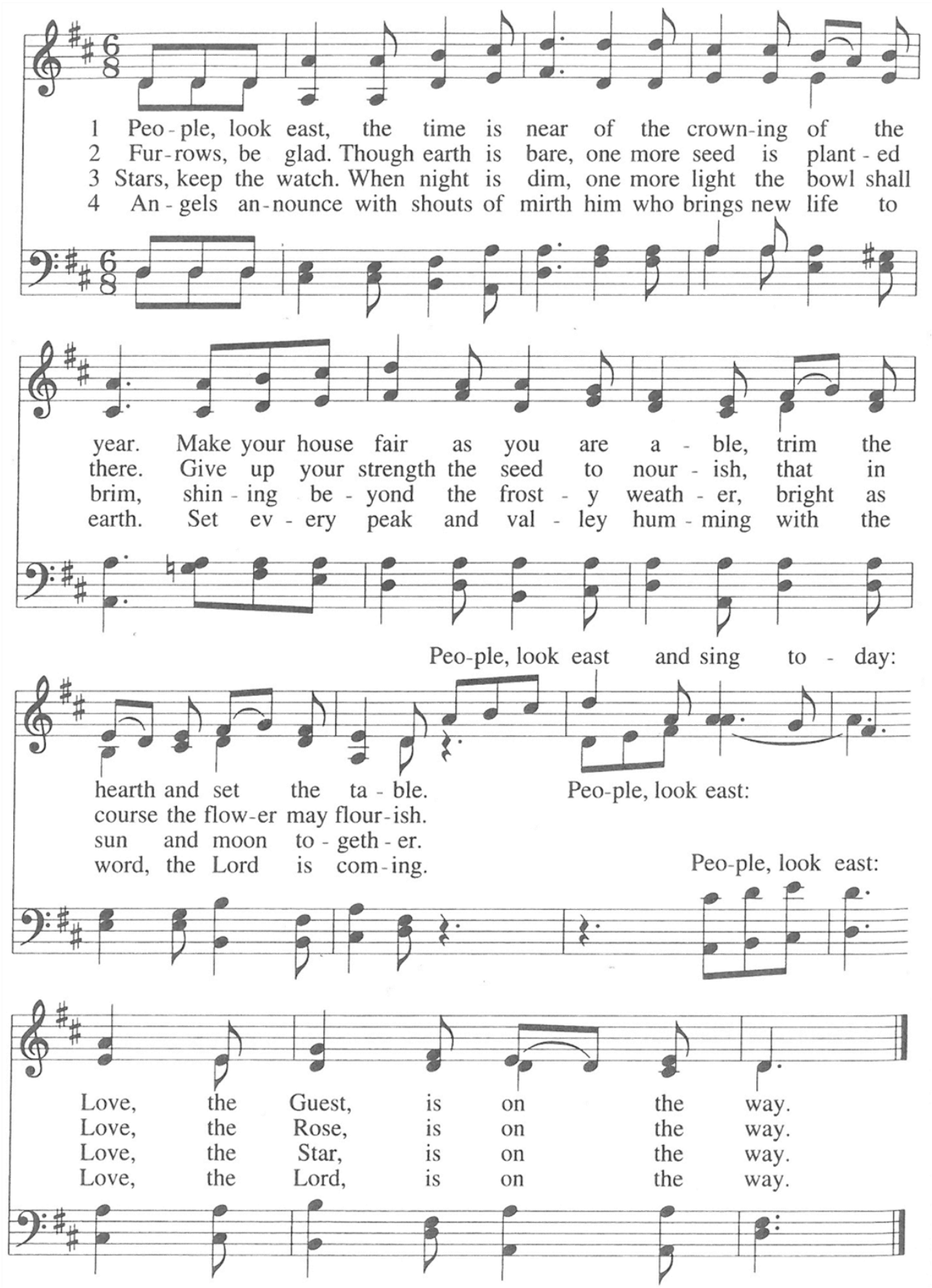
Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Praise God above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Great God of Adventure, **come again to our lives and our community. Come to us with new strength and encouragement. Help us in these days of expectation and preparation to get ready for the amazing arrival again of the Baby of Bethlehem. Guide us as we move forward and bless the gifts we offer this day that they may bring hope and light to our world. Amen.**

Sending

HYMN** ***People, Look East



***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher:	Chris Myers
Celebrant:	Chris Myers
Cantor:	David Reilly
Liturgist:	Sue Danielson
Deacons:	Kathy Rausch, Becky Pajac, Kam Ross, Melissa Oscanyan, Kathy Tomlinson
Organist:	Marsha Pearson
Live Stream:	Jeff Hoffman
Nursery:	Kahla Fuller
Trustee:	Steve Koecher
Welcomers:	Jill Hatfield, Deb Hulbert
Coffee Fellowship:	Beatty Family
Counters:	Trish Graves, Dennis Linder

Altar table flowers are given by Lori Otto in honor of her father's 90th birthday.
Altar table flowers are given by Marge Filkins in memory of Jim Filkins.

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 22, 2026	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	$ 1,805	$ 515,733
General Fund Operational Needs	$ 11,308	$ 531,476

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), Diana (friend of Janice Healy), Kelly (sister-in-law of Cindy Gandrud), Dave Woeste, 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 and Jerry Anderson, Raelle Jorae, Aamon Johnson (nephew of Tanya Larsen), Christina Krueger, Becca Hoblin (daughter or Rae and Dick)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those who were received as members on Sunday, November 22, may we make room for their gifts
- For our church choir, bells and musicians getting ready for Evening Prayer Worship Services this Wednesday and Christmas Eve, may you help us sing our praise
- For our cooks, servers and guests at the Tuesday, December 8th Christmas Luncheon at noon where we will eat and celebrate together with the help of the RFHS Costumed Carolers led by our own Tanner Pietz!
- For those helping our children get ready for the Christmas program on December 20th at 10am, may their joy inspire us
- For our trustees who are developing the 2027 church budget, may we help them by giving generously to support the churches mission and programs

Prayers for our World:

- For those traveling over the Thanksgiving holiday, may you travel safely there and home
- For a safe and fruitful hunting season
- 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 their 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 for 2027
- For those who took the Giving Tree ornaments in a record 8 days, may they bring joy to those who receive them
- For Diane Welsh who is again coordinating our church's portion of the Giving Tree this year, we appreciate you!
- For our Trustees who recently painted classroom 101 downstairs (they are trying to repaint one classroom a year), it looks brand new!
- For Tanner and Madeline Pietz who celebrated their 3rd wedding anniversary on November 10, may your love continue to grow
- For those who gave blood at our last blood drive on Wed, Nov 25, 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 Donna Skule (sister-in-law of Marshall Skule), Jeff Johnson (brother of Jenny Luedtke) and Mary Sterba (mother of Scott Sterba) who died recently, may their families be comforted
- For families of Matthew Drinkwine (son of Katy Kapaun our Wednesday Meal Church Cook), Bernie Schmahl (brother of Marylee and Becky Pajac), Lynn Merriman, Neil Williams, Connie Pajac (sister of Jeff Pajac), 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.

16 Ways to Get Ready for the Birth of the Christ Child this Christmas

1. Enjoy the beautiful sung Wednesday Night Evening Prayer services on Wednesdays December 2, 9 and 16
2. Pick an ornament off the Giving Tree and help a local family
3. Volunteer as Christmas Eve liturgist or luminary lighter
4. Enjoy the Christmas Luncheon on Tuesday, December 8
5. Join us on Christmas Eve at 4:00 or 10:00 pm as we welcome the Christ child!
6. Donate items for the Christmas Shoebox Ministry given to men in rehab at the Kinnic Falls Center
7. Enjoy the Children's Christmas Program on Sunday, December 20
8. Cheer the choir on Sundays December 6 and 13 and on Christmas Eve at 10:00 pm
9. Participate in the Christmas Fund special offering benefiting those who have served the church
10. Do crafts and community at the Advent Workshop on Sunday, December 6
11. Revel in the bell choir as they lend their gifts on Sunday, December 6
12. Sponsor a poinsettia for the Christmas Eve service that can be taken home or given to a shut-in
13. Deliver an Amaryllis plant to one of our shut-ins or special friends
14. Bake some cookies and give them away or trade them at the Cookie Exchange on December 6
15. Attend the Longest Night Winter Soulstice Christmas Service on Monday, December 21 at 6:30 pm
16. Pray that in your busyness, boredom or distraction, you may find time to welcome the Christ child into your life

NOVEMBER 29, 2026 (B) PURPLE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 13:24-37

'But in those days, after that suffering,

the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'