



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

110 North Third Street
River Falls, WI 54022
715-425-2052
www.firstchurchrf.org

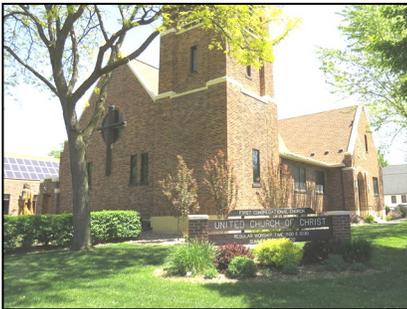
God is still speaking,

June 1, 2020

*No matter who you are,
No matter where you are
on your spiritual journey,
you are welcome here!*

As Jesus' courageous disciples, living God's grace, we strive to:

- Worship faithfully
- Welcome openly
- Grow spiritually
- Care passionately
- Serve generously



Pastor's Page

Nobody wants to get back to in-person worship more than I do. While I am extremely thankful for the option of online worship, it is not the same. As my grandmother once remarked, 'you miss the people.' After ten weeks of being apart, we are all anxiously awaiting the time we can worship together.

Church Council, staff and leaders have been meeting, talking and praying about the best ways to reopen our church ministries. To be honest, it is incorrect to say the church was closed. While the church building may have been temporarily closed, the

ministry of the church has continued in amazing ways. When the pandemic hit in mid-March, in the span of a week, we put together our online worship service never missing even one Sunday. Church Council, confirmation, church interns and other groups made a quick pivot into Zoom, email and online gatherings. And you, the people of the church, reached out to one another in absolutely amazing and creative ways calling one another, sending notes, shopping for one another, making prayer shawls, quilts, masks, praying for one another, supporting the Compassion Fund. Through all of this, while the church building may have been closed, the ministry of First Congregational Church did not stop for a single day. God bless you all!

So when will the church building open? Our plan as of today is that starting June 1 the church office will be open from 9:00 am until noon Monday through Thursday. If you need to contact church staff, this would be the best time to contact them. Please feel free to use their cell and email contacts outside these hours. Church staff will work hard to keep the building clean and germ free with daily cleaning of surfaces. We encourage you to use a mask or face covering when coming into the church building.

When will church programs resume? The Bible Study group, who numbers about 10 people, will gather in the beginning part of June to resume their study. They plan to meet outside on the church lawn to ensure maximum safety. In-person church meetings can resume starting in June once they are scheduled through the church office to ensure that the meeting space has been

cleaned and set up to accommodate social distancing which is our new normal. We have not yet made a decision on VBS, but we know it will have to be very different than in years past. Stay tuned.

When can worship resume?

Working with the Pierce County Public Health Department, we have decided that the safest way for us to begin worshipping together will be to move worship outside onto the church lawn. Worship leaders are working through some of the logistics of this, including sounds systems, music and our radio broadcast. Social distancing will be required, masks will be encouraged but not required, and there will be limited seating, even while outside. Live streaming of the worship service will continue even when in-person worship services resume. We hope to begin in-person worship outside on the church lawn by the end of June, but this is all dependent upon local conditions. As I write this, the city of River Falls is having two mini-outbreaks of COVID-19, with over 35 confirmed cases and 20 probable cases in Pierce County, mostly in River Falls. Please look to the Weekly Word email, church website and the next newsletter for further developments on this very fluid situation.

Our plan going forward to combine our faith command to love our neighbors as ourselves as well as the best public health practices. I know this is a trying time for all of you. Please treat one another with extra grace and pray for our church leaders trying to shepherd us through this strange moment in history.

In Great Gratitude, Pastor Chris

GROW spiritually

Online Family Resources

Each week family resources that match the sermon text are posted on the church website. The resources include a one-page discussion page as well as a coloring page and other similar activities. Please take the time to

use their resources. They are designed to enrich your worship experience and keep us together as a worshipping and learning community while we are apart from each other. The pages will continue throughout the summer.

Pastoral Care

Our church staff are here to help and support you. Please do not hesitate to contact a pastor or church staff member through email or phone. As hospital and nursing home access is severely limited, we have a system to reach out to our shut-ins and vulnerable

seniors with notes and cards. If you want to be included in this ministry please email the church office (office@firstchurchrf.org) & we will connect you to a shut-in.

Church Finances

Although we no longer meet in person, please maintain your financial pledge or consider an extra gift. Gifts can be mailed or even better, sign up for e-giving by contacting the church office. There is also a secure mail drop in the right hand pillar of the front entrance of the church building which is checked daily.

Summer Worship Schedule

Our church has begun its summer worship schedule as follows:

9:30 am—Livestream on the church YouTube channel which is also archived for later viewing. You can also access the livestream link from the church webpage.

11:00-11:30 am—Radio broadcast on WEVR 106.3 FM

Sunday, May 31—Pentecost and Graduation Sunday—Acts 2:1-21

Pentecost is the day we celebrate both the gift of the Holy Spirit and beginning of church. This is also the day we will honor and bless our high school graduates and award church scholarships. Both of these will still take place on this day, though done virtually. Our graduates this year include: Jana Elsesser, Mackenzie Korent, Seth Larsen, Nathan Lawrence, Alex Martin, Taylar Meier, Peter Noreen, Wesley Papp, Jared Plackner, Aspen Richter, Colin Richter, Cass Rude, Chloe Simonet, Maria Tiede.

Among Friends

On Tuesday, May 11 we hosted our first Among Friends zoom event. It was a bit chaotic and a whole lot funny and overall a successful disaster. People saw each other but couldn't hear, and some folks were distracted by caregivers trying to help. But, in the end, we chatted and Martha led us in singing and we shared laughter together, connecting with each other on the internet. Imagine being average age 77, born into a world of manual typewriters — never even dreaming of computers or the internet, and with some level of dementia joining a zoom chat room? Our participants did this.

Norma, Martha, Nancy, Jan, and Bonnie spent some extra time researching ideas that might work for us. Norma contacted every participant, the Pierce ADRC donated iPads to us, and we gave it a try. Thursday, May 14 was our second day. We saw each other, Ruth led chatting about flowers and weather, Jan led us in chair yoga, Norma organized online Bingo, and we waved goodbye to each other. Fewer technology glitches and more time chatting with each. By the grace of God, our staff, volunteers, and participants will continue our Among Friends program in the age of social distancing.

If you have an idea that lends itself to being presented on a visual platform, please let us know and you will be our "featured guest" of the week. This can be singing, trick dogs, whatever. Please contact Norma Revels at 651-260-5725 or Bonnie Jones-Witthuhn at 715-307-1182.

Final Bible Study of the Year

Tuesday afternoon Bible Study participants are invited to a final Bible Study session of the year. We will gather outside on the church lawn observing social distance on June 2 at 1:00 pm. Please bring your own lawn chair and water bottle and plan not to enter the church building. We will discuss chapters/studies 7 and 8 as well as “Reading the Bible in the Twenty-First Century” on page 99 of Berhard Anderson’s *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*. This gathering is dependent on favorable weather. If health conditions in River Falls change, the event could change. Please contact Stacy or the church office with questions.

Pen Pal Prayer Partners

Are you interested in becoming pen pal prayer partner? We will link people together and they can write letters to each other, send them through the mail, and hold each other in prayer. If you are interested in participating, please send an email to: stacy@firstchurchrf.org.

Yoga Goes Online!

The church yoga group now has its own YouTube channel. Jan Hansen, our yoga leader, videotaped some of her lessons. We will be adding some of these archived videos to the YouTube channel. We look forward to the day when she can lead them in person in the Fellowship Hall.

Link to church yoga:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7BtDxvrlUs>

Concerning People

- Congratulations to Emily Stifter and Colin Cosgrove who both graduated from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa virtually, on Sunday, May 24. Emily will be headed to France to help with Luther’s French program. Colin will be headed to Chicago to teach in a public school.
- Congratulations to Katie Kruger who graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN recently. Katie is headed to Chiropractor school in St Louis, Missouri.
- Congratulations to Andy Myers who graduated from St. Olaf College on Sunday, May 24. Andy is headed to Stanford University as a Research Fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research.
- Betty Church has her new book out. The church library will receive a copy.
- Connie Foster has been named Interim Chancellor at UWRF starting July 1.
- Graduation Sunday will be Sunday, May 31. We will honor and recognize our graduating high school seniors during the online worship service.

Do you have other upcoming news and celebrations to share with the congregation? Graduations? Birthday and Anniversary celebrations? Please email them to office@firstchurchrf.org.

Treasurer’s Report

	Week of	
	May 10, 2020	Year to Date
General Fund Income *	\$ 21,870	\$ 215,320
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,582	\$ 182,058

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

Church Staff

You can contact them via their email and cell numbers which are below.

Chris Myers—chris@firstchurchrf.org - 715-441-2497
Missy Luedtke—missy@firstchurchrf.org - 715-222-5427
Stacy Myers—stacy@firstchurchrf.org - 715-338-6406
Dave Ostendorf—dave@firstchurchrf.org - 715-441-6559
JaNae Westrich—jmwestrich@gmail.com - 715-897-5358
Jaime Mills—degolierjamie@gmail.com - 715-419-0850
Dave Mountain—focusfan2001@yahoo.com - 715-245-6854
Tim Bylander—timthefixitguy@gmail.com - 715-808-2900

**First Congregational United
Church of Christ**

Office Phone: 715-425-2052
E-mail: office@firstchurchrf.org
Website: www.firstchurchrf.org



STAFF

Chris Myers, Pastor
Dave Ostendorf, Minister for Community and Outreach
Stacy Johnson, CE Minister
JaNae Westrich, Youth Pastor
Missy Luedtke, Office Coordinator
Brad Williams, Moderator
Jamie Mills, Music Coordinator and Bell Choir Director
Katelyn Peterson, Choir Director
Marsha Pearson, Organist
Terry Mithun, Organist
Tim Bylander, Building Supervisor
Dave Mountain, Custodian

Pastor's home phone number:
Chris Myers 715-426-2075
chris@firstchurchrf.org

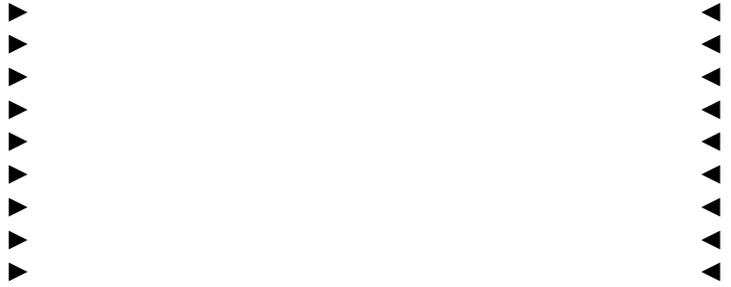
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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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River Falls, Wisconsin 54022
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JUNE 1, 2020



Ways to Reach Out to Others

All of us want to do something to help and be Jesus' loving disciples in the present moment. Below are some specific things you can do at home:

Quilts/Prayer Shawls: We continue to collect prayer shawls, quilts and handmade items. If you have some to donate, please contact Pastor Chris who will distribute them to our seniors and shut-ins.

Shut-ins/Seniors: We have connected our seniors/shut-ins with church families who send them notes, small parcels and kid's artwork. If you want to be matched with a shut-in, contact the church office.

Compassion Fund: There are families in our church who have been furloughed, fired, and laid off. We will be able to offer some modest assistance to these families through our church Compassion Fund. Gifts should be mailed to the church and marked 'Compassion Fund.' Families who need assistance, please contact Pastor Chris.

Prayer: Prayer connects us with God and our neighbors. Pray for the helpers. Pray for your families. Pray for people losing their jobs. Pray for students learning online. Pray for families learning new routines. Pray for people cooped up inside. Each week there is a prayer list of people, situations and thanksgivings that is sent out by email to help people in their prayer life. You can sign up by contacting the church office. There is also a link to the prayer list on the church website.

Masks Available at Church

Wearing a mask is one way that we are able to contribute to our neighbors' health. We have masks available at church. If you need one, please call the church office. If you are willing to contribute to our supply, thank you!



Thank you to all the people who have been so kind to me with cards, telephone calls, visits, flowers, food. Blessing to all of you. Thanks again.
All my love, Polly Wymer