



FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL

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

God is still speaking,

June 15, 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

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the place where, tradition tells us, Jesus was buried. Today a huge, rambling, ancient church marks the location where it is believed Jesus was both crucified (Golgotha) and then after he died, placed in a tomb. The first church was built there in the late 300's and people have been building and rebuilding churches in that spot ever since. It is a focal point for pilgrims around the world. Until today. Only in the past week has it reopened, allowing exactly 25

worshippers in at a time. It closed to the world, for almost two months. It was the first time it was closed for an extended time since 1349. Just think about that. It stayed open during wars and riots, government upheavals, but closed for the COVID-19 crisis. This tells me we are living in a very unique moment.

Starting Sunday, June 28 we are hoping to begin offering in person worship services again at First Congregational Church out on the church lawn. There are a host of technical issues we need to address and we are hopeful these will be in place by then (moving the livestream outside, recording for the radio service, making sure we have access to the internet, hooking up microphones and keyboards not to mention training ushers, deacons, greeters in new safety protocols). Below please find some answers.

Why outside not inside? Pierce County Public Health has said this is the least risky way to begin offering in person worship. With our small sanctuary and social distancing it also means more people can safely gather.

What if it rains? If it rains or storms, outside in person worship will be cancelled and online/radio only worship will be offered. We will make the call by 8:30 am on Sunday mornings and update both the church website and Facebook page.

What will worship look like? It will look much like the livestream now, a shortened, but familiar worship

service including songs lead by a song leader, a brief scripture text and message, prayers and children's sermon. There will be no coffee fellowship, nursery care or Sunday School.

What should I know before I come? First and most important, if you are feeling sick, stay home. Even if you think it is just a cold or allergies. Please consider wearing a mask or face covering, extras will be available. Space will be limited so you will need to reserve a space ahead of time. We will designate spaces on the church lawn for each family group or individual to sit which allow for social distancing. Please bring your own chair, though we will have some available. Sunglasses and hats, even lawn blankets are encouraged.

Will the livestream and radio broadcast continue? Yes! We will continue to offer both the livestream (live at 9:30 am, archived on the church YouTube channel for later viewing) and the radio broadcast on WEVR 106.3 FM at 11:00 am. We hope to offer both of these for the foreseeable future.

You have no idea how much I miss seeing you in person. I look forward to the day when we can safely gather together in prayer and praise to worship and connect with each other again. Please continue to pray for our worship and church leadership teams as they help us navigate through this.

In Gratitude,
Pastor Chris

GROW spiritually

Online Family Resources

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

use the 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.

An Open, Honest and Faithful Conversation About Race

As mentioned recently in worship, five River Falls churches have agreed to begin having a conversation about race. We will be using the book: *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism?* Written by Robin DiAngelo. The cost is \$15 each. Copies are limited. Please purchase from the church office. Both online and small group in person discussion groups will be offered. It is our sincere hope that this can be a time when we can talk openly, honestly and faithfully about race.

Vacation Bible School: Summer of 2020

One of the biggest disappointments of COVID-19 for our congregation is that we will not be able to hold VBS in our traditional manner. It is not responsible for us to invite 125+ people into the building at the same time. Currently Christian Education is formulating a plan to hold some smaller summer sessions for students. We will seek feedback from the Pierce County Public Health Officer to ensure that we are adequately considering issues around safety for children and adults. At this point we hope to offer events for small groups of students. Please stay tuned; more details will be available in the coming weeks. AND... mark your calendars for the first full week of August, 2021 when we hope to be back with a robust, wonderful, gigantic VBS week.



Peaches Return

Once again our youth will be offering delicious peaches grown in the mountains of Washington. Orders will be taken starting mid-July and the peaches will arrive in late August or early September. All proceeds go to our youth programming. We will need lots of help from our youth and families to help this program succeed.

Website Survey

The church is updating its website. Please take 3 minutes to complete this 10 question survey which will help us improve our ability to provide you with accurate, timely, and accessible information about the church and its ministries. You can access the survey through the link below, the church webpage or Facebook. We ask every church individual (not family but each individual, member or not) to complete the survey within the next week, **before Friday, June 19**. Thank you for taking time to do this!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FIRSTCONGREGATIONAL2020>

Summer Adult Bible Study

Every second Tuesday at 10:00 am we will have Bible study on the church lawn. All are welcome! Please consider joining the group for lively, interesting discussion. The next gathering will be on **Tuesday, June 16 from 10:00-11:30 am**. The focus will be Jonah's story. Please read the book of Jonah (only four chapters long) and bring a lawn chair. The next Tuesday session will be June 30 and the topic is Esther.

Yoga Resumes

Please note that the Yoga group will begin meeting again outside on the church lawn on Tuesdays and Thursdays at **9:00 am starting Tuesday, June 16**. In the event of rain or inclement weather, yoga will be cancelled and will not at this time be held indoors. This is another way we at church are slowly, safely and faithfully trying to resume our church ministries. You can still access archived videos online—please see below.

Pen Pal Prayer Partners

Are you interested in becoming a 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 Online!

The church yoga group now has its own YouTube channel. Jan Hansen, our yoga leader, videotaped some of her lessons. We have added 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: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7BtDxvrlUs>

Concerning People

- A HUGE thanks to Jennie Price and Jean Smith who have been making LOTS of masks to be given away!
- Betty Church will celebrate her 93rd birthday on June 15. She resides at CCH in Hudson and you may send birthday cards to her daughter at: Betty Church 93, 227 N. 4th Street, River Falls, WI 54022. Happy Birthday Betty!
- Dani Filkins is working on her nursing degree and working at Regions Hospital in St. Paul
- Katelyn Peterson, our interim Choir Director, is headed to UW Milwaukee to pursue a Master's Degree in Choral Directing. Thank you for making beautiful music with us Katelyn!

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	Year to Date
	June 7, 2020	
General Fund Income *	\$ 475	\$ 223,771
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,582	\$ 220,386

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

2020 Strengthen the Church Offering

Once again we are invited to participate in the Strengthen the Church Offering that supports the important work of congregations and ministries in settings across the United Church of Christ. Youth and leadership development are key programs supported by this Offering, along with the formation of new and young pastors. A portion of our support stays in Wisconsin to support that work among our many congregations across the entire State. Annually we contribute generously to Strengthen the Church, and we hope to do so again this year. Checks can be made to the church and designated "Strengthen the Church." Many thanks!

Cities Working Group Established

Mission Education has established a Cities Working Group to help the congregation actively address and engage in matters related to the recovery of the Twin Cities, and in addressing the deeper issues of racism both here and in the Cities. The Working Group will be tasked with this responsibility for at least the coming year. Its work will include guidance in building and allocating the Twin Cities Recovery Fund, which has been established to provide support to families, neighborhoods, businesses, youth and organizations deeply impacted in recent weeks. The Committee invites members of the congregation to consider becoming part of this important initiative by contacting Bobbie Kuhn or Pastor Dave.

Betty Church has a new book out based on her 93 years of living. It is called *Mom Even Said*. She celebrates her 93rd birthday on June 15. A copy of her book is in the church office and can be checked out. Contact the church office.

Simpson Shelter is in need of homemade masks for children. If you are willing to make and contribute any child-size masks, please contact the church office. We will collect them and get them to the Simpson office.

Update From Our Mission Partner: Our Neighbors' Place

Here is an overview of their plans going forward:

- Our Backpack Program has been running during the closure (in partnership with the River Falls School District - they have been able to deliver many bags to families who are also receiving food through the district). The school year program ended last week - the Summer Backpack Program starts this week and will continue through the end of August. If anyone would like to sign up for the summer backpack program, have them contact Shelly Smith at 715-426-9000. The only requirement is that the family has school-aged children (K-12) in the River Falls School District.
- Our Transitional Housing building continues to house families experiencing homelessness - case management is being handled by phone, text, and email.
- Our Day Center will be reopening by appointment starting Tuesday, June 2nd by appointment. We will be taking appointments Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays for things like showers, laundry, housing counseling, case management, etc. Items that can be packed up (food, Panera Bread, etc.) will be brought outside to guests. One person per appointment (no children). ONP employees/volunteers will be wearing masks and guests will be asked to wear a mask (one will be provided if a guest is in need). Appointments can be made by [calling 715-426-9000](tel:715-426-9000), [texting 715-821-9519](tel:715-821-9519) or 715-821-5310, or [emailing director@ourneighborsplace.org](mailto:director@ourneighborsplace.org)
- Our Clothing Closet is in the process of getting switched over to spring/summer items. Once that switchover is complete - the Closet will be open by appointment as well (Tue, Wed, Thu). We are hoping to be able to accept donations soon (once the Closet reopens).



Dear Church Family,

I would like to thank the 1st Congregational Church of RF for my scholarship. This very generous gift is greatly appreciated to help cover college costs and help me pursue my dreams.

Thank you! Taylar Meier

Dear First Congregational Church,

Thank you so much for the scholarship. Your generous support allows me to pursue my dreams. I am so grateful for being able to meet so many wonderful people at this church. Your gratitude will be forever remembered by me. Thank you! Sincerely, Colin Richter

Dear Church,

Thank you very much for the generous scholarship. Over the years, you have supported me in many ways and have made me feel like part of the family at this church. I will be attending the University of Central Florida this fall. But while my life will take me many places, I will always remember my home.

Sincerely, Aspen Richter

Dear Congregation,

Thank you so much for your generous gifts that have enabled me to receive this scholarship! In today's unstable economy especially, this money will serve me even better than normal and words cannot express how thankful I am. People at college are always shocked to hear I got a scholarship from my church and

because it is uncommon I believe it really helps us stand out. Thanks again and I hope you all have a safe, healthy, but also good summer!

William Tuchtenhagen

Dear Church Family,

Thank you for the amazing chance to receive the church scholarship for a second year. I will be using this scholarship to continue onto my 2nd year at Gustavus Adolphus College and pursue a degree in psychology. I am extremely grateful for all that has been given to me and am excited for my next year of college in the fall. Thank you again for all the support shown to me.

Go Gusties! Kathryn Myers

Dear First Congregational,

Thank you so much for the generous scholarship which will allow me to continue enrollment at Western despite complications due to the virus. When I am in London, I sing in the choir and as a soloist at the UCC there. It was my first community when I moved to Canada knowing no one. It means a lot that I have such a wonderful, supportive community here at home as well! Thanks so much, Natalie Nelson

Dear Church Family,

I would like to thank you for your endless support and encouragement with the donations you have provided me over the years. The money you have blessed me with has allowed me to continue to pursue my dream of attending chiropractic school in the fall of 2020. I will be attending Logan University in St. Louis, Missouri and can't wait to share my future successes with

you all. Again thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Katie Krueger

Dear Church,

Thank you for the generous scholarship and for supporting me during these past 15 years. I will be using the scholarship to study math, economics, stats, and data science at St. Olaf College and (hopefully) at the London School of Economics. This church has taught me the importance of using these gifts that God has given me which I have been able to do during Back Bay Mission, Feed My Starving Children, Habitat for Humanity, and the dish room to name a few. This church has also allowed me to learn about myself and the world during confirmation and the Boston trip. I will miss this congregation when I return to college, but I will remember the support and generosity that this congregation has shown me.

Thanks, Matthew Myers

Dear Congregation,

I received my scholarship acceptance letter today in the mail and I am astonished. It does not go unnoticed how generous, kind, and thoughtful this award is. I will be using this scholarship for furthering my nursing degree next year after obtaining my RN license this year. The Lord's love has really been evident in my current job at Region's Hospital while dealing with the pandemic and unfortunate injuries from the riots in the Twin Cities. However, this exceptional notion has me wanting to pursue and serve others like Jesus would. Thank you all so much for expressing your faith in this generous way.

Danielle Filkins, almost RN

**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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JUNE 15, 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.

Twin Cities Recovery Fund: A fund has been established to help rebuild the Twin Cities affected by recent riots. The goal is to help in two ways, one with immediate help to families and second is to help small businesses rebuild. Money will be dispersed quickly through trusted, partner agencies established by the church.

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

In keeping with advice from public health officials, we recommend people wear masks to contribute to our neighbors' health. Thanks to the generosity of several sewers, particularly Jean Smith and Jennie Price, 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!