

Weekly Word – For Sunday, November 29, 2020

A quick note about finances: As of this week, the church is about \$12,500 behind in its giving. We have already reduced staffing, turned off fridges and freezers, reduced heat and all the expenses we can. Please be sure to mail in your offering each week or month and consider making an extra gift to support the mission and ministry of our church as detailed below. Your generosity is the engine that drives our church. God bless you all!

Worship this Week: Waiting. No one likes it and yet 2020 has been a year of waiting. Advent, which begins this Sunday, is the season of waiting and watching for God. The good news is that there is work to do while we wait and watch. This Sunday our gospel lesson from Mark 13:32-37 provides us some guidance with how we can wait and watch in faith and hope. Join us for worship online live at 10:00 am (archived for later viewing) or on the radio at 11:00 am on WEVR 106.3FM/1050 AM.

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/HPssduHvGnw>

Sunday Bulletin 11-29-20

This Week:

Sun., Nov 29	10:00-11:00 am	Worship Service – Livestream (also on radio at 11:00 am)
Wed., Dec 2	1:00-2:30 pm	Adult Bible Study – Zoom
	6:30-7:00 pm	Advent Evening Prayer – Livestream
	7:00-7:30 pm	Pre-Confirmation (Grade 6) – Zoom
	7:00-7:30 pm	Confirmation Year 2 (Grade 8) – Zoom
	7:00-8:00 pm	Sing-Along – Zoom
Sun., Dec 6	10:00-11:00 am	Worship Service – Livestream (also on radio at 11:00 am)

Next Faith At Home Bags Ready: The next Faith At Home resource bag is ready on November 29. If you are in quarantine and cannot pick up your bag, contact the church office and we will deliver it. Please return the previous month's bag, red folder, and storybook.

Advent Workshop Kits: Advent Workshop kits are available for pick up in the church office. If you cannot come during office hours, please call the church office and we will make arrangements with you.

Advent-Christmas-Epiphany Calendars: On November 29 we begin the new church year. You are invited to use this time to pay attention to what God is doing in your life, in our church family's life, and in the world. To help you we have a calendar of activities to help you pay attention. Allow it to guide your thoughts, activities, and understanding. Calendars are available for pick up at church.

Confirmation and Interns: Confirmation and Church Interns continue, for now, online via Zoom. Please watch for the weekly Confirmation Update emails and talk to Pastor Chris with any questions (chris@firstchurchrf.org). Since we are in Advent, class begins at 6:30 for Evening Prayer (livestream) then our Zoom class at 7:00 pm.

Quarantining: With the spread of COVID-19, more and more families are having to quarantine at some point. Please know that your church stands ready to support and help you as we can. We have volunteers who can run errands, pick up medicine or food, even deliver your Sunday School materials if you are quarantined. Please also know church staff are here to help you navigate the intense emotional pressures these situations bring with them. Contact the church office for more information ([715-425-2052](tel:715-425-2052)—office@firstchurchrf.org)

Drive-Thru Communion: On the first Sunday of each month, the deacons and pastors will offer drive-thru communion. Please pull up in front of the Elm Street doors of the church and a deacon will bring individual communion elements to you in your car, then one of the pastors will pray with you. All will be wearing masks and stay outside so we can serve communion as safely and faithfully as we can. We serve from 9:00-9:45 am so people can be home for the 10:00 am livestream worship service. You do not need to sign up for this. Thank you to our deacons and pastors who are again pivoting.

Advent Evening Prayer: Each Advent we gather in the sanctuary for the beautiful, sung Holden Evening Prayer worship service at 6:30 pm. Once again, even a pandemic cannot stop us. Though we cannot safely gather in the sanctuary, a livestream of Evening Prayer will be held at **6:30 pm on Wednesdays, December 2, 9 and 16**. Our singers will sing, our pastors will read scripture and a story, and you can join at home. Look to future Weekly Words for more information and the link.

Sing-Along: We will be hosting virtual sing-alongs this December! Come join UCC choir members to sing Christmas carols via Zoom on **December 2, 9, and 16 from 7:00-8:00 pm** (following the Advent service livestream.) The Zoom link and music PDFs will be available on the church website. As it is impossible to line everyone's voices up in a live virtual setting, singers will have to perform with their microphones turned off. However, you will have the opportunity to sing along to the piano as loudly as you would like in the comfort of your home! We look forward to this chance to enjoy some safe, musical, fellowship.

Weekly Adult Bible Study: The Adult Bible Study will read and discuss *Names for the Messiah* by Walter Brueggemann on **Wednesday, December 2, 9 and 16 from 1:00–2:30 pm, via Zoom**. All are welcome! Copies of the book are available in the church office for \$11.00 each. Please contact the church office for a Zoom link.

Sign Up Sheets: All of the current sign-up sheets are on the church website. Go to the Resource page and then click on Sign Up Sheets.

Church Yoga: Jan Hansen's church yoga group will hibernate for the next few weeks. You can still access archived yoga classes through their YouTube channel available on the church website on the Connect page.

Book Club: The Book Club will have a **Holiday Tea via Zoom on December 10 at 3:00 pm**. Please contact Bonnie at 715-307-1182 for more information.

5 Ways to Live Thankfully and Generously:

Giftng Our Shut-Ins and Special Friends This Christmas: Each year our church families deliver potted amaryllis plants to our shut-ins and special friends. This will be an especially important endeavor this year. The plants are provided. We ask you to sign up, pick up your plant at church, pot it at home (it is super easy), then deliver it to the local shut-in you are assigned. Feel free to include some cookies, a Christmas card, or children's artwork. What a wonderful way to be the body of Christ in the world. Sign up today! Deliveries will start in early December.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-amaryllis>

Angels On Earth Giving Tree: Help local families this Christmas by signing up and purchasing a gift on the wish list. **Please go to the link below (also on the church website) to see the wish list. Type your name in the box of the gift you will buy.** The unwrapped gift needs to be at church **no later than Tuesday, December 8th**. Please give the gift cards to the church office. If you would like to make a cash donation instead, please send the check (made out to First Congregational Church with "Giving Tree" in the memo line) to the church office. Thank you for your generosity. Please call the church office with questions or for help signing up 715-425-2052.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DP_qeJ0xmzRqfnlpTqitfEnkuvrycQqLhbDyOhtWkVM/edit?usp=sharing

Christmas Shoebox Project 2020: Our Christmas Shoebox Project will go on even during these strange times of a Pandemic! For many years, the yoga group & members have supported a "Christmas Shoebox" for the men at the Kinnic Drug & Alcohol Rehab Center in River Falls. We will again collect items, wrap, & deliver the boxes to show that we all still care! The look on the faces & the thankfulness is something I wish all of you could see. A list of items is below. Please bring donations to the church by December 14. Cash donations will be used to purchase any needed items. If you have questions, please contact Jean at jsmithler@yahoo.com or at 715-781-6880.

Updated Items: Wall calendars, games (Uno-puzzles-table), toothbrushes, deodorant, razors, nail clippers, packages of popcorn, socks

Among Friends Volunteers Needed—two opportunities: If you have a willing heart and a voice to share, we need 4-6 individuals who are willing to be part of a duet or quartet sharing 2-3 songs while being socially distanced outside of our participants' homes. This can be done at a time convenient for you that also works for our Among Friends participants. Please contact Bonnie at 715-307-1182. Thanks.

Free Money for Church Ministries: The church has created an Amazon Smile account through which the church can receive a portion of the price of each purchase you make through Amazon. It is important to know that you need to do two things for the church to receive this money. First, go to Amazon Smile by typing in smile.amazon.com and then add First Congregational Church River Falls to your Amazon Smile. Second, every time you order you must order through your Smile account by going to smile.amazon.com. Once you do this, the church will receive 0.5% of each eligible order. Please contact the church office if you have questions.

Finances: Please maintain your financial pledge or even consider an extra gift. Gifts can be mailed, dropped at the church office, or even better, sign up for e-giving through this form (Electronic Giving Form). There is also a secure mail drop in the right-hand pillar of the front entrance of the church building which is checked daily.

	Nov 22, 2020	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	\$ 9,524	\$ 437,784
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,582	\$ 450,354

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

2021 Financial Pledge: The Discipleship Committee sent out 2021 financial pledging information in a recent mailing. Please prayerfully consider your financial giving to support the church mission and ministry in the coming year and return your pledge form by November 30. We ask you to do three things:

- * If you don't pledge, please begin this year.
- * If you do pledge, please increase your pledge, even if only a little bit.
- * If you do pledge, please consider signing up for electronic giving which is safe, reliable and easy.

Your generosity is the engine that drives our mission and ministry. Your giving changes lives and helps make this world a brighter, more hopeful and graceful place. Thank you!

People:

- For Laura and Mark Anderson who decorated the urns at the entrance of the church
- For Donna and Mike Moseman who are delivering this month's treat bags to the shut-ins which are overflowing with goodies, that they may be a tangible sign of God's grace
- For Marshall Skule who made 40 nativity sets for families to assemble and use at home
- For Pastor Stacy and her team who put together incredible Advent Ornament Kits and the December Faith At Home Bags
- For the now 3 different vaccines, that they may quickly, safely and equitably be shared in our world
- For Eunice Filkins who made pocket prayer quilts for shut-ins and Joan Hyland who made yet more quilts to be given at baptisms
- For those who helped make our fall Wednesday Night meal program a success!
- For the blessings of daily life, even in a pandemic

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 by Wednesday of each week to be included in the Weekly Word which is sent out on Thursdays.

Prayer: Prayer connects us with God and our neighbors. If ever there were a time we need connection, it is now. Each week in the bulletin there is a prayer list of people, situations and thanksgivings that is also sent out by email to help people in their prayer life. You can sign up by contacting the church office (office@firstchurchrf.org).

Church Staff Contact:

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