

## Weekly Word - For Sunday, September 13, 2020

### Rally Day This Sunday!

Rally Day (Sunday, September 13) marks the beginning of the church program year. This will be a different, but not entirely different year, full of opportunities to worship, connect and grow. Especially at a time such as this, we need to nurture the gift of faith and stay connected as a church family. Here is our upcoming schedule:

WORSHIP will be outside on the church lawn at 9:30 am. When we have reached our outdoor capacity (60 people), we will consider adding another worship time. Please bring a chair, mask and sit by the orange cones which maintain distance and keep us all safe. Our theme this fall is THE GIFT OF FAITH and how our faith can help us thrive in an uncertain world. This week we begin by looking at the book of Esther and the gift of COURAGE. Worship will also be live-streamed on the church YouTube channel (archived for later viewing) and on WEVR 106.3 at 11:00 am.

Sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-sign11>

Worship link: [https://youtu.be/OkxvOjfJ\\_f8](https://youtu.be/OkxvOjfJ_f8)

SUNDAY SCHOOL will move to an at-home learning format. Sign up for a monthly bag below. September bags will be ready for pick up this Sunday. A video orientation will be posted Sunday morning from Pastor Stacy.

Elementary At-Home Bag sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-elementary>

Middle School At-Home Bag sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-middle>

CONFIRMATION (Grades 6-9) will gather for small group, outside bonfires on Wednesday, September 16. Register for confirmation (Registration Form). A video orientation will be posted on Sunday morning from Pastor Chris.

OTHER PROGRAMS - There are many other additional programs and opportunities this fall including the Adult Bible Study, The Walk (5-week small group online study), Men's Group, Yoga, Church Interns, Small Church Gatherings and many other programs that are detailed in the Weekly Word which is emailed each Thursday.

The gift of faith can help us navigate an often chaotic and uncertain world. Join us as we seek to nurture and grow our faith this fall and beyond.

**Sundays in September:** For the month of September we will continue to offer worship in three ways:

- Outdoor worship on the church lawn live at 9:30 am for which you must register and bring your own chair/blanket and wear a mask. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-sign11>
- Livestream worship live at 9:30 am (archived on the church YouTube channel for later viewing)
- Radio worship at 11am on WEVR 106.3 FM.

The church bathrooms are open, but the nursery is closed and Sunday School/Confirmation is moved to an at home format (see below). In case of rain outdoor worship is cancelled.

**Fall Schedule for Faith Formation:** Letters went out last week to church families about plans for Sunday School and Confirmation. Like so much of life, we are adapting our programs to life in a pandemic. Sunday School will switch to at-home bags, confirmation will meet for small group, outside bonfires then move to online gatherings. Check the Weekly Word and the church website for updates.

**Compassion Fund:** To date over \$30,000 has been given to this fund which helps families in our community who have been furloughed, fired, and laid off. We have provided grocery gift cards and rental/mortgage assistance to many families we know have been financially affected. If you would like to contribute to this fund, gifts should be mailed to the church and marked ‘Compassion Fund.’ Families who need assistance, please contact Pastor Chris directly ([chris@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org)).

**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](mailto:office@firstchurchrf.org)) and we will connect you to a shut-in.

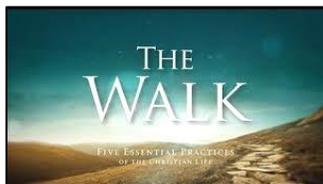
**Help Needed: Ministry to Shut-ins and Seniors:** For the past few months Pastor Chris has dropped off home baked goodies and hand-made prayer shawls, quilts, coasters, book marks, and crosses. As the virus drags on, we are in need of ways to keep our shut-ins and seniors connected and remind them they may be isolated but they are not alone. We need a small team of people who will take over this ministry by regularly providing, soliciting, and delivering ‘treat bags’ and notes of encouragement to our shut-ins and vulnerable seniors. Our church has about 10 of these. If you would be willing to be a part of this ministry, please contact the church office.

**College Packs:** Each fall our confirmands gather supplies for college packs — care packages to be sent off to our church freshmen who are starting college. It is a wonderful and appreciated tradition. This year our confirmands will continue this project, but we would like to expand it to include all of our college kids. This is going to be a different and difficult year, especially for college students. We invite the WHOLE congregation to bring items to church to be packed by our church interns for our college sophomores, juniors and seniors. We ask you to bring in fun and useful items that you might like to receive if you were in college — silly putty, play-doh, prepacked snacks, detergent packs, Halloween décor, etc. Please buy identical items in groups of 5 or 10 and the church interns will pack them and send them off with a note and prayer for the year. Items need to be at church by **Wednesday, September 23**. Have fun with this and show some love to our college kids!

**Small Church Gatherings:** In the earliest days of the Christian church, people gathered together in “house churches.” It was a time for worship and fellowship. We would like to use this idea and establish “Small Church Gatherings.” Interested people would gather in small groups—fewer than 15—outside on the lawn or inside in the Fellowship Hall, socially distant and masked. The gatherings will be informal, include scripture and prayer, and conversation. Depending on interest Small Church Gatherings could be held during the day or evening every second week. Please use the links below (or on the church website on the Worship page) to indicate your interest:

Daytime Small Church Gathering sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-daytime>

Evening Small Church Gathering sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-evening>



**The Walk: 5 Essential Christian Practices—starting this fall:** Pastor Chris will be leading this 5-week online small group experience designed to help us connect to each other and our faith in our current Covid separated environment. Cost for the book is \$10 and you must register in advance (see link below). Classes run Tuesday nights in October and November. Join us!

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

**Adult Bible Study:** The Adult Bible Study group will meet every other Wednesday from 1:00 to 2:30 pm socially distanced in the Fellowship Hall. Please wear a mask. The book “Sermon on the Mount” is available in the church office for \$14. Our first meeting will be **Wed, September 23, 1:00–2:30 pm**. All are welcome.

**Making a Place for Worship at Home:** As the pandemic persists, we will continue to have outdoor, streamed and radio worship services. To facilitate worship when we are at home, we are inviting all families and households to create a cross that will be a focal point for worship. We will provide a wooden cross and stained glass pieces to glue onto the cross. For each season of the church year, we will send a small colored parament (the fabric banners that are used in worship) to put under your cross as a reminder of the liturgical season.

If you are interested in making a cross, please sign up using this link:

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

If you cannot make a cross, but would like one made for you, please sign up using this link:

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

**Sunday School:** Rally Day, the beginning of the new Sunday School year, is September 13. In accord with our new COVID-19 reality, the first months, if not the whole Sunday School year will be different from years past. Here are details:

- First Congregational Church will provide At-Home Worship Bags for families to do together. The bags will *not* be filled with worksheets. The bags will include resources designed to be readily incorporated into family life. Including:
  - ✓ A story/coloring book featuring *Picture the Bible*-inspired art.
  - ✓ Prayers for meal and bed times.
  - ✓ A “Dear PC” opportunity—a chance to send a question to Pastor Chris who will send back a response.
  - ✓ Storybooks to read together.
  - ✓ A hands-on project.
  - ✓ A *Picture the Bible* family resource page.
- Families will pick up a new bag each month and will return the previous month’s bag.
- Each child will receive a “passport.” The passport will outline the month’s activities and be a structure for keeping track of what is accomplished.
- I will post a video link on September 13 with a virtual orientation to Sunday School. In this video I will discuss the logistics of picking up and dropping off the bags as well as ways to use the At-Home Sunday School bags. Please plan to view this link.

To receive a bag, children must register. Please do this as soon as possible, but no later than September 10. Families will pick up a family-specific bag each month. The sign-up links are below.

Elementary At-Home Bag sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-elementary>

Middle School At-Home Bag sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-middle>

**Church Interns Gather:** Church interns are those 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who want to continue to grow their God given gifts and serve their community and church. The first gatherings will be **Sunday, September 20 after the 9:30 am outdoor worship service** to pack college packs and then again on **Wednesday, September 30 at 6:00 pm**. Please be sure to register (Registration Form) to receive information.

**Welcome Back Time Out Families!** Cooler mornings and warm afternoons mean the change of the season is upon us so let us get together and celebrate all things family and fall. Please see the link below for more information about our meet up at White Pine Berry Farm. It will be on **Sunday, October 4 from 1:00-2:30 pm**. Call or text JaNae at 715-897-5358 or email if you have any questions! It will be great to see you all again!

<http://whitepineberryfarm.com/fall/>

**Men’s Group Gathering:** The group is planning to get together on **Tuesday, September 15 at 9:00 am outside on the church lawn** (depending on the weather). If you can come, please bring a face mask and lawn chair.

**Book Group:** We will meet on the church lawn **Thursday, September 24, at 10:30 am** (back up rain/weather date: Thursday, October 1, 10:30 am). We'll discuss Trevor Noah's memoir of growing up in South Africa: *Born a Crime – Stories of a South African Childhood*. Books are available for check out in the church office. Please join us for connection and conversation. (Please bring a lawn chair; if that's difficult, contact Suzanne Hagen (715-425-1471) and she'll provide one.)

**Church Yoga:** Jan Hansen's church yoga group will meet outside when they can, but also meet in the Fellowship Hall from 9:00-10:00 am on Tuesdays and Thursdays when it is too cold or rainy outside. You can also access the yoga classes on their own YouTube channel with archived classes. The link is here and also on the church website. [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDKI4WmalDidWZwixjZGSFw?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDKI4WmalDidWZwixjZGSFw?view_as=subscriber)

**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.

	<b>Week of</b>	
	<b>Sept 6, 2020</b>	<b>Year to Date</b>
General Fund Income*	\$ 11,399	\$ 340,215
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,582	\$ 344,952

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

\*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

### **People:**

- For Tim Bylander and his crew in the church nursery rebuilding a wall and make it look great again
- For those who have been so generous in providing church masks that people can take and use. Thanks to Jean Smith, Jennie Price, Suzanne Hagen, Lynn Linder, Vicki Hoffman.

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](mailto: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. Pray for the helpers. Pray for your families. Pray for people losing their jobs. 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 ([office@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:office@firstchurchrf.org)).

### **Prayer list**

**Masks:** We have masks available at church, including child-size masks. If you need one, please call the office.

**Staff:** Church staff are doing their best trying to work from both home and office. If you cannot reach staff at church please try their email and cell numbers which are below. The best way to contact them is via email.

### **Church Staff Contact:**

Pastor Chris Myers - [chris@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org) - 715-441-2497

Missy Luedtke - [missy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:missy@firstchurchrf.org) - 715-222-5427

Stacy Johnson Myers - [stacy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:stacy@firstchurchrf.org) - 715-338-6406

Dave Ostendorf - [dave@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:dave@firstchurchrf.org) - 715-441-6559

JaNae Westrich - [jmwestrich@gmail.com](mailto:jmwestrich@gmail.com) - 715-897-5358

Jaime Mills - [degolierjamie@gmail.com](mailto:degolierjamie@gmail.com) - 715-419-0850

Dave Mountain - [focusfan2001@yahoo.com](mailto:focusfan2001@yahoo.com) - 715-245-6854

Tim Bylander - [timthefixitguy@gmail.com](mailto:timthefixitguy@gmail.com) - 715-808-2900