



**FIRST**  
**CONGREGATIONAL**

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

# God is still speaking,

April 1, 2021

*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

We all carry scars. Some of the them are quite visible—the marks we wear on our bodies from surgeries or accidents. Other scars are quite deep, too deep really, so we try to hide them.

I find it quite interesting that after Easter, when Jesus appeared to his followers he chose to return wearing his scars. Presumably

Jesus could have had any resurrected body he wanted, and yet he chose one identifiable mainly by the scars that could be seen and touched. Why?

It seems to me the story of Easter would be incomplete without those scars on the hands, feet, and side of Jesus. When human beings fantasize, we dream of pearly straight teeth, wrinkle-free skin and sexy ideal shapes. We dream of an unnatural state: the perfect body. But for Jesus, being confined in a skeleton and human skin WAS the unnatural state. The scars are, to him, an emblem of life on our planet, a permanent reminder of those days of confinement and suffering.

This past year with the pandemic, we all bear some internal scars. Plans changed. Loved ones sick or even lost to COVID. Jobs changed or at least altered. Familiar routines and traditions like graduations, weddings, funerals, confirmation, all of which were affected. To say our world was turned upside down is an understatement. This past year, we have all been scarred at some point.

So I take hope in Jesus' scars. From a faith perspective, his scars represent the horrible event that happened in the crucifixion and God's power to bring healing and new life to it. Because of Easter, I can hope that the tears we shed,

the blows we receive, the emotional pain, the heartache over lost friends and loved ones, all these will become memories, like Jesus' scars. Scars never completely go away, but neither do they hurt any longer. In faith we see the amazing ways God is at work redeeming, recreating and renewing our world today. Easter gives the world and ourselves, a new start, an Easter start.

A blessed Easter season to you all.

Christ is risen!

Pastor Chris



## Scholarships Due

The deadline for church scholarships is Sunday, May 2. The church awards three types of scholarships:

- *Senior Scholarships* to graduating high school seniors
- *Continuing Education Scholarships* to those engaged in college, technical school or advanced degrees
- *Spiritual Growth Scholarships* for those who wish to go to church camp or church mission trips

Please check out all the details, forms and eligibility on the church website under the 'connect' tab.

## GROW spiritually

### Adult Bible Study

Weekly Adult Bible Study meets Wednesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm via Zoom. Our discussions are open to all. The current text is *First and Second Corinthians* by John Proctor and is available in the church office for \$25.00. Please contact the church office for a Zoom link to participate.

### Confirmation and Church Intern Classes Move to In Person

Starting in April, we hope to move our Confirmation and Church Intern classes from Zoom to an in-person format. Please pay attention to the weekly confirmation email for details. We will continue to monitor the local COVID situation and meet in ways that allow for maximum distancing.

### Little Books

“Little Books” are a new resource that grew out of the pandemic. Each Little Book features

seven Bible stories, biblical quotation, and a question to consider. The newest Little Book is for Holy Week and Easter. If you are interested in a copy, contact the church office.



### Holy Week Worship

Holy Week is the most important week for Christian people. In it, we see the depth and power of God’s love at work in the world and our call to embody that love in our living today. All the services will offer both in person and livestream options and our Sunday services are also broadcast on WEVR radio. Our Holy Week schedule will be:

Palm Sunday	Worship at 10:00 am
Maundy Thursday	Worship at 6:30 pm
Good Friday	Worship at 6:30 pm
Easter Sunday	Worship at 9:00 and 10:00 am indoors Worship at 11:00 am outdoors (all Easter services will include communion)

Please note for in-person worship you must register, wear a mask and observe social distancing requirements.

### Three Ways to Worship: In Person, Online and Radio!

We have now successfully added another way to worship—in person in the Fellowship Hall at 10:00 am. To gather both faithfully and safely, we will have to:

- \* Register ahead of time for worship (registration will open Wednesday mornings)
- \* Limit our gatherings to 75 people
- \* Wear masks, social distance and wash hands
- \* Allow the song leaders to sing while you enjoy their sounds
- \* If you are feeling ill for any reason or have been exposed, please stay home and enjoy worship via the livestream or radio.

As a reminder, the church Fellowship Hall and Office have new bipolar ionization technology that cleans the air and refreshes the room every fifteen minutes. We are pleased we can again offer three ways to worship each Sunday. As the weather warms, we hope to also offer a brief outdoor option for those who are not comfortable being indoors. Please continue to pray for our pastors, worship leaders, musicians and webteam as we try to safely and faithfully worship together.

## Our Youth Minister, JaNae Westrich, Is Moving

Our Youth Minister, JaNae Westrich is moving. Her husband Adam, pastor at St. Paul's UCC in Ellsworth, has accepted a call at First UCC in Green Bay and will be moving there in early May. We are planning on a farewell celebration for JaNae on Sunday, April 25th. Please pray for strength and guidance for them during this transition and for our church as we begin the search for a new Youth Minister. Please also join us in worship on that day so we can thank her for her ministry and wish her well in her next ministry.



### Gus De Souza Library

A new children's library has been created in honor of Gus de Souza. For many years Gus and his wife Barb were healthcare missionaries in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where they founded a clinic and community center. They retired to River Falls (in their 80's!)



after decades of service in Brazil. Gus died a year and half ago and now this library has been created in the Brazilian community center in his honor. May it nourish hungry minds!



### Give Blood!

Join us in the Fellowship Hall to give blood on **Friday, April 16 from 2:00 to 7:00 pm.** The sign-up link is below. You CAN donate blood if you received the COVID vaccine. Special thanks to Mikayla Peterson, one of our high school church interns, who is coordinating this blood drive.

<https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=firstcongregationalrf>

### Upcoming Important Dates

Sunday May 2 Confirmation Sunday

Sunday June 6 Graduation Sunday

### Recent Pastoral Acts

Wedding for Spencer Wakefield and Kim Engler on January 23, 2021

Memorial Service for Dan Filkins on January 31, 2021

Funeral for Polly Wymer on March 6, 2021

#### A NOTE OF



To my dear church friends,  
I thank you much for all the phone calls, gifts, and notes I have received from you!

I am well-cared for here! My children are taking good care of me too! Peggy Steinmetz is my next door friend and neighbor! I couldn't have a better one!

People should not have to make appointments to attend church! This is crazy! Hope this changes quick!!

Love you all, Alice Hanson



### At-Home Communion

With the winter weather upon us, if you are not able to get to church for drive-thru communion (or if you would like to take communion at a different time), the Deacons are available to bring communion to you! We are happy to come to you for doorstep or even contactless Communion. We will bring the elements to you and share a short prayer if you would like. Please let the church office know if you or anyone you know would benefit from this service, and we'll contact you to arrange a time.



## Wednesday Night Family Meals To Go!

Our Wednesday Meals served to-go style will continue through the end of April. The cost is \$8.00. Please sign up by Tuesday then drive through the church alley between 5:00-6:00 pm on Wednesday and a church intern will deliver it to your car. Enjoy!

April 7 - Relay for Life Soup Supper—two 12-ounce containers of soup, crackers, bun, cookie bar & a clementine. Soup choices: chili, chicken wild rice, tomato basil, chicken noodle. Money collected goes to Relay for Life.

April 14 - Lasagna and chicken alfredo, salad, and garlic toast

April 21 - Meatloaf, macaroni and cheese, vegetable, and dinner roll

April 28 - Chicken marsala, rice pilaf, asparagus salad, croissant—Last Meal of the Program Year!

### Church Yoga

Jan Hansen's church yoga group meets on Tuesday and Thursdays in person with a small group of people in the Fellowship Hall from 9:00-10:00 am and via Zoom. Please call the church office to receive the Zoom link.

### Rental Needed

Lori Nitz's daughter Jennifer Moen is looking for a furnished summer rental with hi-speed internet within 45 minutes of River Falls. Please call Jennifer at 1-608-553-0815 or Lori at 715-426-6437.

### amazon smile 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](https://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](https://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.

### Simpson Shelter Supply Needs

- Twin, full, and queen size blankets and sheet sets—new
- Pillows—new
- White t-shirts—new, sizes small and medium
- Large tubs of Country Time Lemonade and Kool Aid mixes (we use these in Igloo containers for meals)
- Hot sauce
- Coffee—ground, caffeinated
- Products for textured and natural hair
- New shower curtains and shower rings

There is a box at the church for donations. Thank you!

## Treasurer's Report

	Week of Mar 21, 2021	Year to Date
General Fund Income *	\$ 1,815	\$ 156,826
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,262	\$ 111,144

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](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org) - 715-441-2497  
Missy Luedtke—[missy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:missy@firstchurchrf.org) - 715-222-5427  
Stacy Myers—[stacy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:stacy@firstchurchrf.org) - 715-338-6406  
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Tim Bylander—[timthefixitguy@gmail.com](mailto:timthefixitguy@gmail.com) - 715-808-2900



# Engaging the Word, Engaging the World...

## Upcoming

**Tuesday, March 30, 4:00-5:00 pm—Make it OK to Talk About Mental Illness** — The Mission Education Committee has been exploring mental health support systems for the community. This free online event is part of a community campaign by Hudson Hospital to increase understanding and creating caring conversations about mental health concerns and illness. For information and registration go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/make-it-ok-to-talk-about-mental-illness-tickets-132591319205>.

**Beginning Tuesday, April 6, 6:30 pm:** *Hope for Creation* and the UWRF Office of Sustainability will host a community-wide (ZOOM) read of the book ***Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants*** by Robin Wall Kimmerer, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. To participate, sign up by March 30 by emailing [hope4creationRF@gmail.com](mailto:hope4creationRF@gmail.com). The book may be purchased at Fox Den Books on Main Street.

**Saturday, April 17, 9:00 am–1:00 pm—Electronics Recycling Customer Event** at the Public Works Garage, 950 Benson Street. This is the annual event sponsored by the River Falls Municipal Utilities. Please remain inside your vehicle while staff unload items for recycling; should you need to roll down your window to speak to staff, you are requested to wear a mask. Customers are limited to one trip for the event and are asked to *bring a form of identification and a copy of your recent RFMU bill*.

**Sunday, April 18, 3:30 pm—Open Our Hearts to Earth:** *Hope for Creation* will honor Earth Week with a Poetry Reading by Barbara Draper and Thomas R. Smith at the Glen Park Pavilion in River Falls. Draper is a Minneapolis poet whose first book of poems (*Sometimes a Door*) was published in 2019. Smith is an acclaimed River Falls poet and teacher whose many works have been widely published and praised nationally and internationally. Celebrate an outdoor Spring day with them and *Hope for Creation* at the Pavilion.

## Mission Partner: Turningpoint

In 2021 Turningpoint for Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence is again a Mission Partner of the church. Turningpoint began as a crisis line and an all-volunteer “safe house” program. In 1989, after nearly a decade of renting shelter facilities, Turningpoint conducted a successful capital campaign to build its own facility, its first 14-bed shelter, which remains the only domestic and sexual violence crisis shelter in all of Pierce and St. Croix Counties.

Today, in addition to providing shelter and 24-hour crisis counseling, Turningpoint offers legal system support, children’s programming, violence prevention education, safety planning, support groups, and emergency food and hygiene products. Turningpoint has been the state-designated Sexual Assault Services Provider (SASP) for Pierce and St. Croix Counties since 1995.

Turningpoint also operates Second Chances Thrift Store in downtown River Falls. Victims and survivors of violence receive vouchers to obtain clothing, furniture, and household goods from Second Chances. Second Chances Thrift Store is also open to the public and is almost entirely operated by volunteers. Earned revenue from Second Chances Thrift Store comprises approximately 20% of Turningpoint's annual operating budget.

In 2016, with the generous support of the community, Turningpoint was able to expand its crisis shelter from 14 to 21 beds, with the potential for future expansion of up to 25 beds. Turningpoint's mission is to provide support and resources to achieve freedom from domestic and sexual violence. We are grateful for its good work!



Check out the new website! Also in the works is a app for your smart phone. A huge thank you to Brad Richter and the Web Team who have been hard at work revamping and expanding our church website at [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://www.firstchurchrf.org)

## First Congregational United Church of Christ

Office Phone: 715-425-2052  
E-mail: [office@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:office@firstchurchrf.org)  
Website: [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://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  
Joel Larsen, Moderator  
Jamie Mills, Music Coordinator and Bell 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](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org)

## FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

PERMIT #53

RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

APRIL 1, 2021

## 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:

**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.

**Sign Up Sheets:** All of the current sign-up sheets are on the church website. Click on the "Connect" button at the top of the page and then select "Sign Ups/Forms."

**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 at 715-425-2052 or [office@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:office@firstchurchrf.org)