

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

November 28, 2021



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

November 28, 2021

First Sunday in Advent

10:00 am

Gathering

If the Gospel is good news, it is not because it predicts a bright shiny future based on our morality or piety. The Gospel is neither a cocoon that insulates us from the sufferings of this present age, nor a pair of ear plugs that shuts out the groaning of creation. The Gospel is good news, not because it predicts a future based on our good behavior or other present trends; the Gospel is good news because it promises a future based on God's own faithfulness to Jesus Christ. ~James McKay

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today! Join us for coffee in the Fellowship Hall following the 10:00 worship service.

- The Nursery is available for young children.
- Church Mouse activity bags are available for children.
- Large print bulletins and hearing-impaired devices are available from the ushers.
 - Please stand when noted by the *
 - Congregation responses are in bold.

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*

GATHERING MUSIC

People Look East

Brass Group

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Today, we begin the journey of Advent.

P: Let us pray that we may be ready and able to welcome the Christ child into our lives again.

L: May the keeping of Advent be upon our hearts and lives.

P: Come, Lord Jesus!

L: May this Advent wreath remind us to prepare for Christ's coming

P: Come, Lord Jesus!

L: The first candle is the candle of HOPE. It was hope that gave people the courage to go on, and it was hope that directed their prayers toward a Messiah.

P: Because of our trust in what God has already done for us, we are bold to hope for what God will yet do with us.

(Light the first Advent candle)

L: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

P: **Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” May our lights so shine before others that they will give glory to God!**

All: **Come, let us worship the God who leads us into life!**

***HYMN**

We Praise You, O God

#420

***OPENING PRAYER**

L: Gracious God, we know we ought to be watching for signs of your presence and of your Son’s coming.

P: **But we are so easily distracted by what is none of our business, like Peter worrying about the Master’s love for John;**

L: Or even by what is our business, like Martha cooking up a storm in her kitchen;

P: **Or by sheer fatigue, like the disciples in Gethsemane.**

L: Forgive our distraction, most patient Lord,

P: **And let this Advent season find us alert to your presence,**

L: And eagerly looking forward to the coming of your Son,

P: **Both at Christmas and at the end of time. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: God has done great things for us.

P: **We are loved, forgiven and claimed by God’s grace.**

All: **God has begun a good work in each of us. Let us live as faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**

L: May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

P: **And also with you.**

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

***GLORIA**

He Came Down

(sung twice)

He came down that we may have hope;

He came down that we may have hope;

Hallelujah forevermore.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

PSALM 25

R *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*

L: To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

P: O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

L: Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

P: Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.

L: Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

P: Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

L: Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

P: Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

L: God leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

P: All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep God's covenant and decrees. R

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Chris Myers

SONG OF BLESSING

*Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (clap, clap).
You do not know the hour when the Lord is coming.
Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (clap, clap).
The Lord is coming soon.*

Celebrating the Meal

(All Christians, regardless of denomination, tradition or age are welcome at the table of our Lord.)

The Invitation to the Meal

L: In love, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of our Lord, Emmanuel. It is a way marked by peace, grace, hope and great joy. And here at his table, we experience a foretaste of God's kingdom come down to earth.

The Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: We lift them up to the Lord.

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

L: We offer you praise, O Lord our God, ...

The Words of Institution

L: Together we rejoice in this holy meal as we remember the mystery of faith...

All: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Prayer of Consecration

Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

There is No Rose - Brass Group

Let Us Break Bread Together

Congregation join on refrain:

Let us break bread together on our knees;

Let us break bread together on our knees;

**Refrain: *When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.***

Let us drink wine together on our knees;

Let us drink wine together on our knees; Refrain

Let us praise God together on our knees;

Let us praise God together on our knees; Refrain

Prayer of Thanksgiving

All: We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 21:25-36

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Lift Up Your Heads

#117

***STATEMENT OF FAITH for Advent**

L: In quietness and darkness, in peace and confusion, Jesus Christ wants to make his home and meet his friends. He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope for the world.**

L: In him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant;

P: **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world.**

L: In him there is neither black nor white, neither north nor south;

P: **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world.**

L: In him there is neither male nor female, neither master nor servant;

P: **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world. Amen.**

THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

How Can I Keep From Singing

Verses



1. My life flows on in end - less song A -
2. Through all the tu - mult and the strife, I
3. What though the tem - pest 'round me roar, I
4. When ty - rants trem - ble, sick with fear, And
5. The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, A



bove earth's lam - en - ta - tion. I hear the real though
hear that mu - sic ring - ing; It sounds and ech - oes
hear the truth it liv - eth. What though the dark - ness
hear their death knells ring - ing; When friends re - joice both
foun - tain ev - er spring - ing. All things are mine since



far - off hymn That hails a new cre - a - tion.
in my soul; How can I keep from sing - ing?
'round me close, Songs in the night it giv - eth.
far and near, How can I keep from sing - ing?
I am his; How can I keep from sing - ing?

Refrain



No storm can shake my in - most calm, While to that rock I'm



cling - ing. Since love is Lord of heav - en and earth,



How can I keep from sing - ing?

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Note about offering: During the pandemic we are not passing the offering plate. We thankfully receive your gifts, tithes and offerings in the offering plate on the back table. Your generosity is the engine that powers our church community. Thank you.

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Assisting in today's worship service are:

Liturgist:	<i>Traci Hagberg</i>
Coffee Fellowship:	<i>Darlene Sumption, Trish Graves, Derick Graves</i>
Deacons:	<i>Marshall Skule, Jena Most, Lois Martin, Zach Martin, Karen Lloyd</i>
Welcomers:	<i>Dennis and Lynn Linder</i>
Nursery:	<i>Kahla Fuller</i>
Organist:	<i>Marsha Pearson</i>
Video Team:	<i>Jeff Hoffman, Mike Stifter</i>
Trustee:	<i>Matthew Thurston</i>
Counters:	<i>Dennis Linder, Trish Graves</i>
Music Coordinator & Bell Director:	<i>Jamie Mills</i>
Choir Director:	<i>Sarah Plum</i>
Church Moderator:	<i>Joel Larsen</i>
Office Administrator:	<i>Missy Luedtke</i>
Youth Pastors:	<i>Alex and Sarah Plum</i>
Minister for Community:	<i>Rev. Dave Ostendorf</i>
CE Minister:	<i>Rev. Stacy Johnson Myers</i>
Senior Pastor:	<i>Rev. Chris Myers</i>

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Nov 21, 2021</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 7,915	\$ 430,515
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,262	\$ 435,314

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Peg Thompson, Roger Hirstein, Jim, Wendy MacDougall (wife of our Association Minister Rob), Edna (friend of the Danielsons and Petersons), Rosalie Harper (cousin on JoAnn Lentz), Donna Moseman, Joan Hyland, Charles Hoffman (father of Jeff Hoffman), Tom (friend of Traci), Jean, Peter Kwong, Dirk Ficca, Neal Prochnow, Debi Bauer, Marjorie Faulks, David Lewis (friend of Jan Hansen), Dave Mountain

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our congregation as we dedicate our 2022 Financial Pledges, that together our generosity may empower the mission and ministry of our church in new and exciting ways
- For our webteam who each week enable us to livestream each worship service, you are a blessing
- For our faithful Wednesday night kitchen crew of Katy Kapaun, Evelyn Purdy, Susan Walden, Anna Anderson and Connor Rude—thanks for feeding us!
- For our new church janitor Farnum Fuller as he takes over for Dave Mountain, may he be given strength!
- For our church musicians Marsha Pearson, Jamie Mills, Sarah Plum, Dave Reilly and others who are preparing for Advent Evening Prayer and Christmas services, may they bring the hope and joy of the Christian faith back to us all
- For those who continue to support our church's ministry with their tithes, offerings and gifts--you are all a blessing

Prayers for our World:

- For the people of Waukesha after a horrific parade incident, may God give them strength
- For the gift of advent, a time to wait and watch for the signs of God's presence all around us—may we pay attention
- For the over 100,000 people who have died from drug overdoses in the past year, may we do better as a nation
- For a safe and fruitful hunting season
- For our stressed out world, may we find the peace of Christ and the joy of faith
- For the 13,000 Afghani refugees at Fort McCoy, WI, that they may be strengthened in their journey

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For the birth of Thea Jane Querna born to Jenny and David Querna (and proud grandparents Wendy and John) 8 weeks early, mom is home, baby is still in hospital but doing well at 3 pounds and 16.5 inches long
- For Peg Steintmetz who celebrated her 90th birthday on Sunday, November 21
- For those who shared their faith story as part of the Tell Me A Story segment this year including Scott Jameson, Marie Roe, George Beatty, Jill Paulson and Lee Lueck.
- For Andy Krueger, Laura Miller, Dave Reilly, our church youth and the whole crew who served a fabulous Giving Thanks Meal, what a gift!
- For the gift of Thanksgiving, that it may kindle generosity and gratefulness in each of us
- For Mason Meyer who celebrated his first communion recently, that he may grow in faith
- For the gift of the Giving Tree and the families it will bless
- For the Shoebox Ministry to the men at Kinnic Rehab, that it may kindle joy and hope
- For our brass group helping to lead worship today—may your notes kindle joy in our hearts

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For Jean Hagberg who died peacefully recently, may she rest in peace
- For Diane Crist's mother, Bonnie Mertens, who died at the age of 93, may she rest in faith
- For those mourning Judith Permann, Dorothy Friedl, Barb Wall and Jeff Peterson, may you not mourn alone
- For the 762,000 Americans & over 5 million worldwide who have died of Covid, may they not have died in vain

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

Christmas Shoebox Project: The Christmas Shoebox Project is for the men at the Kinnic Drug and Alcohol Rehab Center in River Falls. We are collecting items to fill the boxes. A list is available. Cash donations will be used to purchase any needed items. Thank you for your help. If you have any questions, contact Jean Smith at jsmithler@yahoo.com or at 715-781-6880 or the church office.

Angels on Earth Giving Tree: If you would like to help some children have a better Christmas this year, please select an ornament from the tree and purchase a gift from their wish list. The unwrapped gift with the ornament needs to be at church no later than Thursday, December 9. Please give gift cards to the office. If you would like to make a cash donation, please make the check to First Congregational Church with "AOE" in the memo line. Thank you for your generosity. If you have questions, contact Diane Welsh (651-334-3128 or 715-386-6620) or the church office.

The Advent Workshop: The annual Advent Workshop for families will be held following Sunday School on **December 5.** The event will include a chance to make a variety of Christmas ornaments and simple snacks. This is a great family event. Please come and invite friends to join you! Please sign up on the table or online.

Inquirer's Class: Interested in learning more about our life and ministry at First Congregational? Wondering what membership of the church is all about? Come to the Inquirer's Class on **Tuesday, December 7, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm.** At this gathering you will meet church staff and leaders, meet other newcomers, and learn more about our life and ministry opportunities. Dessert and coffee are served and childcare is available. Please sign up on the table or online.

Advent Evening Prayer: Once again this Advent we will gather for Evening Prayer in the Sanctuary on Wednesday nights using our beloved Holden Evening Prayer. Join us on **Wednesday, December 1, 8 and 15 at 6:30 pm** for this half hour worship service. Confirmation, church intern and youth groups will join us for worship then go to class or youth group. Wednesday meals will be served in both 'in person' and 'to go' formats. There will be no Wednesday service on Wednesday, December 22. Our Wednesday Schedule in Advent will be:

3:45-5:15 pm	Wednesday School
5:15-6:00 pm	Family Meals
5:45-6:30 pm	Bell Practice
6:30-7:00 pm	Evening Prayer and beginning of Conf/Interns. Youth Group
7:00-7:30 pm	Second half of Confirmation/Interns/Youth Group
7:00-8:00 pm	Choir Practice

Wednesday Meals: Wednesday Meals return December 1, 8 and 15. Sign up by 4:00 pm Tuesday. This week's menu: Meatballs, butter and parsley potatoes, vegetable, and dinner roll

Advent Devotional: Pick yours up today!

Amaryllis: Sign up to deliver a plant to a shut-in.

NOTES

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 21:25-36

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”