

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

February 15, 2022

*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

On Being Fed

Have you ever noticed that whenever Jesus shows up, food is often involved? This is true in scripture, church life and in our own lives.

Think about scripture. There is the story of the Loaves and Fishes where Jesus multiplies a few fish and loaves of bread to feed thousands (with leftovers!). There is also the story where

Jesus attends a wedding feast in Cana with his mother and disciples (they did more than just drink all that good wine!). Of course there is the story of the Last Supper where Jesus transforms the Passover Seder meal into what today we call the sacrament of communion. After his resurrection Jesus appears again along a lakeshore and feeds his disciples by cooking for them on the beach. And again on the road to Emmaus when Jesus appears to his disciples they do not recognize him until after he blesses and breaks the bread. Only then are their eyes opened and they recognize the risen Jesus in their midst. Clearly Jesus wants to feed people.

This is true in church life as well. People like to eat together. People need to eat together. Some of the biggest gatherings we have at this church involve food—Giving Thanks Meal, Easter Breakfast, Wednesday Night Meals. Think of how many times we have gathered in the Fellowship Hall after a funeral, wedding or baptism to share a meal. This is why during the pandemic, when we had to change or alter some of these traditions of eating together, it was hard and disappointing.

Finally think of your own life and all the times you eat together as a family or friends for holidays like Christmas, Easter or Thanksgiving. Think of family reunions and bar-b-ques, backyard cookouts and hot dog roasts. It doesn't

matter if it is a gourmet meal or brats from the grocery store, the important part is eating together.

This past year, with the support of the Deacons and Church Council, we started offering communion weekly. This was a big change. Many of us grew up receiving communion monthly, sometimes only quarterly. Perhaps you like the new change. Perhaps the change feels strange or jarring. But after only being able to offer virtual communion and drive thru communion for too many months, church leaders wondered if we all just needed to be fed by God for a while to get through the pandemic. We tried something new which is no small thing in the church.

As the pandemic eases, church leaders are taking up the discussion about how often to celebrate communion. The decision to change to weekly communion actually emerged out of discussions last summer with church parents about how to plan for an uncertain fall schedule. One of the refrains parents expressed was that Sunday School kids never had an opportunity to commune, and it was those parents who came up with the idea of offering communion more frequently (some actually applauded when the idea came up).

Continued on next page.

Pastor's Page *Continued from front*

Sometimes I hear people express worry that if we celebrate communion too often it will not be special anymore. While I understand the sentiment, I wonder if you feel that way about the Lord's Prayer which we pray every week or the 'I love you' said to the kid or spouse leaving the house each morning? I also sometimes hear people say weekly communion feels not UCC. And it is true. Most UCC churches do not offer weekly communion. But it is also true that just in my brief lifespan, the frequency of communion celebration has increased dramatically in nearly all UCC churches.

In my own spiritual life, I have found that communion touches me in a way that is beyond words and language. In our media saturated world, we are inundated with so many words and images. Communion touches something deep inside me, beyond words. Communion also has the potential to bind us all together at one table, old and young, rich and poor. Lastly, I can tell you from serving communion to many people including those in hospitals and nursing homes, communion touches them in a way the best sermon or prayer cannot. Communion is Jesus' gift to this disciples meant to feed them and remind them of his continuing presence.

Please spend some time in prayer and reflection about the role of communion in your spiritual life. Reach out to church leaders and myself with your thoughts and comments. Lastly, please continue to pray for our Deacons and Church Council, Moderator and Moderator Elect as they seek to guide us in Christ's love.

In Gratitude, Pastor Chris



St. Olaf Bells Concert

Yet again the St. Olaf Bell Choir will be coming to First Congregation for a concert. This will be the third time the Bell Choir has performed at our church. With 15 ringers and a director, the St. Olaf Bell Choir is a nationally acclaimed musical group. They will perform in the sanctuary on **Friday, February 25 at 7:00 pm**. Matthew Myers, a senior at St. Olaf and member of First Congregational Church, will be one of the students in the choir. Save the date, join us and spread the word! The concert will also be livestreamed.

Please note that St. Olaf College requires either proof of vaccination or a negative covid test to attend the concert in person. This is their rule not ours. Thank you for gracefully abiding by their rules as we welcome them.

Sunday Schedule

- 8:30 am—Coffee ready!
- 8:45-9:45 am—Adult Forum
- 9:00-9:45 am—Music Practice
- 10:00 am—Worship and Sunday School in Sanctuary
- 10:30 am—Kids Preschool thru 8th Grade leave for Sunday School
- 11:00-11:30 am—Coffee Fellowship in Fellowship Hall
- 11:15 am—Sunday School Ends
- 11:30 am—12:30 pm—Middle or High School Youth Group

Our current schedule is above. We are now worshipping in the sanctuary again and continue to ask people to mask when indoors in groups following CDC guidelines. Please continue to pray for our church leadership as they seek to find ways for us to gather both safely and faithfully.



Memorials Given

- Memorials were given in honor of Peg Thompson, which the family has directed towards education and youth.
- Memorials were given in honor of Paul Anderson, which the family has directed towards the Compassion Fund.

Spring Break Trip Cancelled

A reminder that the March Mission Trip to Back Bay was cancelled due to Covid, incredibly high airfares and no church van. The good news is that it has been rescheduled for next spring break!



Sun, Feb 13, 11:30-1:00 pm - Middle & High School Youth Bowling @ St. Croix Lanes

Please sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-middle6>

Wed, Feb 16, 6:30-7:30pm - Church Interns

Wed, Feb 23, 6:30-7:30pm - Middle School Youth Group

Wed, Mar 2, Evening Ash Wednesday Service

Sun, Mar 6 - Middle & High School Youth - Can Can Wonderland, depart 11:30 am, return 4:00 pm

Please sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-middle7>

775 Prior Avenue, Suite #004, St. Paul, MN 55104. Transportation will be provided for those who want it.

Important info for Can Can Wonderland: Masks required. Covid Vaccination cards or negative test (within 72 hours of event) must be presented, and a photo ID if you are over the age of 18. More info on policies found at <https://cancanwonderland.com/covid-19/>



Ash Wednesday and Lent

March 2 is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of Lent. This year we will again gather in the sanctuary for worship with the option of both imposition of ashes and communion. This is an All Worship Day for all of our confirmands, interns and their families. The Wednesday Family Meal will proceed it (sign up ahead of time).

Each Wednesday after Ash Wednesday, we will meet in the Fellowship Hall for Prayer Around the Cross, a brief 30-minute worship service of song, prayer and reflection. This year during Lent we will reflecting on some of the 307 questions Jesus asked through his life and ministry and the 3 he answered. Join us.

Special Youth and Parent Meeting After Ash Wednesday Service

All Middle & High School youth and parents are invited to a special gathering in Fellowship Hall after the Ash Wednesday service to talk about a potential mission trip to South Dakota, camping and Boundary Water trips this summer, as well as the long-delayed Boston trip for confirmands. Pastor Chris and Alex will both lead this 30-minute gathering. Join us!

Adult Forum

The Adult Forum discusses the Sunday's texts prior to worship on Sunday mornings. The conversations focus on reading the worship texts, asking questions, and considering how the text fits our lives and the world. Please come! All are welcome. No one is an expert. The Adult Forum meets in the Youth Room, **Sunday mornings, 8:45-9:45 am.**

Adult Bible Study

The Adult Bible Study group meets **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00-2:30 pm** in the Youth Room. This is a great time to begin—or visit—as the group will start a new book on February 23. The new reading is *The Remarkable Ordinary* by Frederick Buechner. Copies are available in the church office for \$16.00. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Church Yoga

Jan Hansen's church yoga group meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the church Fellowship Hall from 9:00-10:00 am and via Zoom. Please contact the church office to receive the Zoom link.



Family Meals

Wednesday night we are offering our home-cooked meals to be picked up between 5:15 and 6:00 pm. The cost is \$8 per person with a max per family of \$25. For now we are offering a limited number of seats in the Fellowship Hall geared to those already here for Wednesday programming. To go meals can be picked up in the alley in back of the church (enter on Maple & exit on Elm Streets). We are thankful to Katy Kapaun, our church cook, our kitchen helpers & church interns, all of whom make this ministry possible. Please sign up on the website by 4:00 pm Tuesday and indicate 'to go' or 'in person' in the comment section. Here is the menu:

Feb 16—Relay for Life Soup Supper—Menu: two 12-ounce containers of soup, crackers, mandarin orange, and a chocolate chip bar. Soup choices are: beef vegetable, tomato basil, turkey wild rice, turkey noodle, and chili. Cost is \$8 donation which goes to Relay for Life.

Feb 23—Bruschetta chicken over pasta, asparagus salad, garlic toast

Youth Group

Each Wednesday and Sunday our new Youth Ministers, Alex and Sarah Plum, offer gatherings for Middle and High School Students. While in confirmation the focus is on content and faith developments, in youth group we approach faith development through fun and fellowship. Questions? Contact them at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com or 612-224-5894. Join them and bring a friend!



Offering QR Code

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click tab 'Give Online'



Christmas Offering for Feed My Starving Children

Again this year we gave out small containers of M&M's to those who attended Christmas Eve worship services. After eating the M&M's (an important first step!), please fill the plastic container with quarters (\$14 in quarters fits perfectly, but with the coin shortage, dollar bills and checks work as well!). If all who worshipped with us on Christmas Eve return these containers, 80 children will be fed for the entire year which is a worthy and fitting gift to honor Emmanuel, God with us. Please return containers to the offering plate or church office by the end of February. Thank you for your generosity.

Jean Hagberg Memorial Service

Please be advised that a Memorial Service for Jean Hagberg will be **Saturday, April 9**, here at church. Details are still be determined and will be shared when settled. Please keep Jean's family, including Jean's daughter and church deacon Traci in your prayers.

Judith Permann Memorial Service

Please be advised a Memorial Service for Judith Permann, wife of our previous minister the Rev. Del Permann, will be here at First Congregational on **Saturday, June 18 at 11:00 am** with visitation an hour before and a lunch to follow. Judy will be interred in the church Memorial Garden. Please keep Del, adult daughters Rachel and Jennifer, and granddaughter Elena in your prayers.

Engaging the Word, Engaging the World...

Upcoming

Sunday, February 27, 11:15 am in the Fellowship Hall after Worship: Candice Anderson, Executive Director of the River Falls Food Pantry and Shelly Smith, Executive Director of Our Neighbors Place (ONP), will provide us important updates on the work, needs, and plans of both organizations, along with updates on volunteer opportunities in this time of ever-rising need. Church members active with the Pantry and ONP will join the conversation. Hosted by the Mission Education Committee, this is a unique opportunity to learn more about these local Mission Partners.

Wednesdays 6:30-7:30 pm Lower Level of the Library and virtually, February 16, 23, March 2, 9 and 16:
ABCs: Avoiding Burnout & Cultivating Self-Care. Explore tools for resilience, coping with stress, avoiding burnout and finding joy. Connecting with nature is a vital part of the self-care toolbox. or more information: <https://www.riverfallspubliclibrary.org/library-events.html>

Updating

Dr. Mark Seeley's presentation, "Climate Change and Sustainability: Pathways Ahead" can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUHRkSZXwiQ>, the River Falls Library YouTube link. Dr. Seeley joined us at the Library recently as part of the *Hope for Creation* Climate Change series, and as a Learning Community presenter sponsored by our congregation.

Among Friends will reopen its program **Tuesday, March 15**, at the church. Due to the pandemic Among Friends has postponed operations to protect participants and volunteers.

Among Friends seeks a part-time, paid Program Coordinator to assist its commitments with older adults with memory loss, and their caregivers, at its social respite program, which meets weekly at the church. Since 2017 Among Friends has provided welcome support to many area families. Its staff and volunteers are recognized for their kindness and support for participants and their families. To learn more about this position contact Bonnie Jones-Witthun (715-307-1182) or Norma Revels (651-260-5725).

Unfolding

April 5, 6:30 pm "Solar Power: Bringing It Home" in the Fellowship Hall: This Learning Community Gathering will provide homeowners an introduction to home solar installations and solar power options. Area solar installers will join River Falls Municipal Utility staff and current solar homeowners to provide information on the process and outcomes as we expand our sustainability commitments.

This May, the Mission Ed Committee will sponsor a "Mental Health First Aid" class, a training for adults 18 and older, provided by St. Croix Valley United Way. The course teaches the skills to respond to the signs of mental illness and substance use in adults. Look for more information in upcoming newsletters or contact Sally Steneman, stenesal9@gmail.com.



Because Sometimes You Just Need to Party

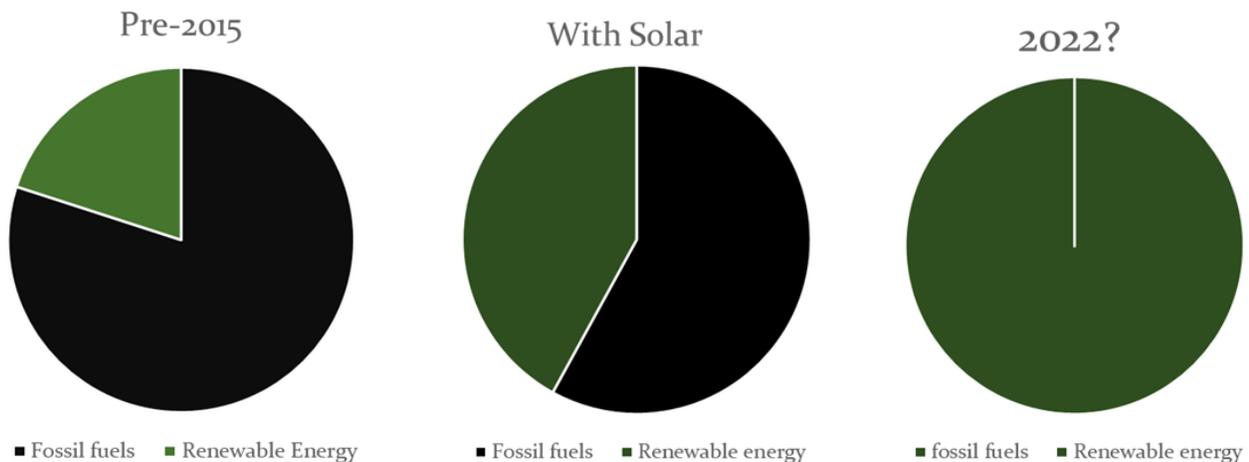
On **Thursday, July 7**, the church is hosting an epic kick off to River Falls Days Weekend: a pizza truck and a Bluegrass band out on the church lawn. Recognizing we all need something fun to look forward to at this time of the year and recognizing also how long this pandemic has dragged on, the Music Committee will be hosting a concert out on the church lawn with a local Bluegrass band providing the entertainment. Details closer as the date approaches. Mark your calendars!

100% of the Church's Electricity Now Comes from Renewable Sources!

This month the church rounded out its renewable electricity commitments begun in 2015 with its 54-panel solar installation—as of 2022 we are now 100% reliant on sustainable electricity provided by additional solar, wind, and biogas sources purchased through the River Falls Municipal Utility. This is a significant step in our sustainability and stewardship commitments!

“Green Block” electricity from wind turbines in Dodge County, Wisconsin; Worth County, Iowa; and Worthington, Minnesota; along with biogas generated in Little Chute, Wisconsin, and solar power from sites in Wisconsin and Iowa add to our own solar installation to completely eliminate our use of fossil fuels for electricity.

As the following charts from Mike Noreen indicate, prior to 2015 most of our electricity came from fossil fuel sources. With our own solar power we edged toward eliminating almost half of those fossil fuels; now we will be done with them entirely. A member of the church, Mike is also the Utility's Conservation and Efficiency Coordinator.



Our renewable energy journey began on a lovely July day in 2015 when 54 solar panels on the Fellowship Hall began converting bright summer sun into electrical power, fulfilling a long-standing vision of First Congregational UCC leaders. From conversations about “the solar possibility” that began the previous fall, bolstered by municipal utility grants and the generous support of the congregation, the project took shape – testimony to our growing stewardship commitments and to our witness for a more sustainable future.

The River Falls Municipal Utility (RFMU) is a recognized and honored national leader in renewable energy programs and customer participation in those programs. The Department of Energy has ranked the Utility first in the State of Wisconsin and fifth in the nation in the category of Green Power Participation. In 2019 the City became the first in the State to power all its municipal buildings by sustainable energy sources.

Along with First Congregational UCC, St. Bridget's Roman Catholic Church and Ezekiel Lutheran now have solar installations, along with numerous homeowners and businesses, the University, and the Utility itself. Through the growing presence of *Hope for Creation* faith communities and their many River Falls partners, sustainability is becoming a serious way of living into the future.

New Members – February 6, 2022

Virgil Jensen - I am the son of Michelle and Neal Jensen. I attend the River Falls High School and will graduate this year. I have been involved with this church and the River Falls community for the last 4 years, before that I attended the Prescott School District and was confirmed at the Prescott United Church of Christ. I am also a member of the church intern program.



Marlys Peterson - I was born and raised in River Falls, worked at 3M for almost 30 years. Lived in Hudson for 17 years, got married and moved to Texas and lived there for 27 years. My husband passed away in 2017. Since I had nobody left, I decided to move back to River Falls to be with my two sisters and friends.



Alex and Sarah Plum - We are so thrilled to have found a church family at First Congregational Church here in River Falls. Natives of Eagan, MN and Cameron, WI, we are so excited to plant roots in this community which is halfway between our families and has such a rich tradition of education, music, and outreach. In our free time, we like to hike, travel, try cooking new recipes, and give lots of love to our puppy, Nellie. Alex likes to cross country ski in the winter, and Sarah is more of a stay inside and watch Harry Potter kind of person. We are both teachers in the River Falls School District, and look forward to getting more involved in the church and community.



Natasha Rayne - I was born and raised in Suriname, South America. Raised in a Christian home, I was made aware of God's love for me from an early age. In my late teens, I decided I wanted to have a relationship with my heavenly Father, something my parents had taught me about. That is when I became serious about living out my faith. My education brought me to the U.S. in 2010. After completion of graduate school, I moved to River Falls in 2015 where I started my career at UW-River Falls. This is also where I met my husband, Peter. I absolutely love River Falls and our church community and with great anticipation, I look forward to the ways in which I'll grow, all the things I'll learn, and the ways in which God will chose to spread his love through me.



David Reilly - I was born in 1968 in Vermont and was adopted by Bill and Ruth Reilly, who at the time were members of the Congregational Church in Northfield, Vermont. I spent most of my first 12 years as a member of that church. When we moved to River Falls I was 12 years old and my mother's Lutheran roots called her to Ezekiel Lutheran, where I was confirmed. I joined the Navy at the age of 18 and was on active duty from 1987 to 1995, during which I didn't go to church unless I was home on a long liberty or on leave. After I moved back to River Falls in 1996 I resumed attending Ezekiel with my mother. I joined the choir at the request of Sarah Parks, then director of the Ezekiel choir. There was a schism in the church and Ruth and I left at that time. Ruth began attending this church and I stopped going to church altogether. I was asked, in 2008, to come and sing with the Chancel Choir by Sarah Parks who had made the move from Ezekiel and needed basses for the choir. I have remained here ever since. It was just recently that I found out that I was not a member, even after 14 years so here I am, finally joining the congregation as a full member. I can do this with a happy heart, because this church is my home and my family.



Pete and Mary Yaeger - We have lived in Hudson for over 20 years and have 2 children in college, and 2 dogs at home. We love to spend time at our cabin, fishing, at'ing, traveling, and spending time with family and friends. Pete works in IT, and Mary works in operations at the same Christian based senior living health care company in Edina, called Cassia. We are looking forward to joining First Congregational Church.



Ministry to Shut Ins and Seniors

Each month a small team of volunteers delivers a gift bag with homemade treats, cards, and small gifts to the shut-ins and special senior friends of the church. It is a valuable and important ministry reminding these people of God's care for them and their continued connection to the church family. If you would like to be a part of this growing ministry, please contact the church office. You could donate items for the bags. Or you could sign up for a month, fill the bags and then deliver them to approximately 24 households (many are in nursing homes or apartments so there are fewer stops). Those currently helping with this ministry are Jill Paulson, Carole Mottaz, Randy and Diane Welsh, Callie Trautmiller, Jeff and Becky Pajac.



New Church App

The church has a new mobile phone app. You can download it from the church website or by scanning the QR Code to the left (directions below) which can also be found on a flyer on the sign-up table and Facebook. The App includes: Live and Past Services, Weekly Word, Newsletters, Sign Up Sheets, Events Calendar, Prayer Wall, Giving, Bible, News Feed, Push Notifications. Call the church office with any questions or if you need help.

Five easy steps to get our church app on your mobile device:

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code above or visit: <https://bit.ly/FCCApp>
3. Click on the link that pops up
4. Install the Church App - Tithe.ly onto your device
5. Open the Church App (skip login if prompted) and get connected with our church



Altar Flowers

Please sign up to provide flowers for the altar for Sunday worship. Sign up at church or on the church website:

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

Welcomers Needed

Please sign up to be a welcomer on Sunday morning before the worship service. One person is needed for at the bottom of the stairs at the 3rd Street Entrance. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to the worship service. Sign up at church or here:

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

Coffee Fellowship Hosts and Liturgists Needed

Coffee Fellowship Hosts will be asked to serve Best Maid cookies which are in the church freezer, make lemonade and/or serve coffee. All the materials are provided, you will simply need to serve and clean up (at this point we are using disposable cups). Sign up at church or on the church website: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-coffee>

Liturgists will lead us in the Call to Worship and one of the Scripture Lessons. The material will be emailed out on Thursday to practice. Sign up at church or on the church website: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-liturgist>

Please note church interns can receive credit for either of these activities. Thank you for volunteering in these important ministries as we continue our journey.

Afghan Resettlement Project Update

First Congregational has been exploring the possibility of being a co-sponsor to welcome Afghan evacuees to River Falls. We have recently learned we need to support this project in a different way. Below is a brief summary of the situation and our decision:

- Because River Falls is outside a 100-mile radius from a refugee resettlement agency in Wisconsin that is recognized by the US State Department, River Falls would need to apply for a geographic exemption.
- River Falls is in a strong position to be granted a geographic exemption, except for one detail: we have limited public transportation (only the taxi within city limits). To have the best chance to be accepted, we need to show realistic employment opportunities adults could get to independently and perform with limited to no English language ability. We are unable to demonstrate that.
- The leadership groups decided to shift our financial support to a group of five congregations in Eau Claire (including three UCC churches) that are further along in the process than we are. We also designated funds to support dental care for the Afghans. Dental care is critically important for their overall health. While ultimately they will be eligible for dental care through Medicaid, Medicaid approval is both limited and takes a long time to acquire. Our gift will allow a bridge to Medicaid approval as well as dental care that is not covered by Medicaid.

While the committee and I are disappointed not to have the chance to welcome Afghans to our community, we need to serve in a way we are needed rather than how we want to serve.

Many thanks to the people who donated funds. Our congregation will be sending \$16,100 for this effort.

Pastor Stacy

Mortgage Summary—As of February 1, 2022

Original cost of Facilities Expansion Project	\$2,386,970.00
Remaining amount on Bank Loan	\$495,000.00
Cash on hand in the Building Fund	\$93,967.85
Interest Rate (Locked in through January 2027)	3.39%
Monthly Payment	\$2,622.76

Save Your Batteries to Recycle!

We have a container available for recycling all those old, depleted batteries. Start saving them now and bring them to church. We'll pass them on to the recyclers and keep them out of landfills and the environment in our ongoing commitment to sustainability.



Want a foosball table?

It is free to a good home. Contact George Beatty at 612-719-8026.

People in the Pews: Sarah Plum

1. *Where did you grow up?* I grew up in Cameron, Wisconsin, just south of Rice Lake. I loved growing up in a small town. River Falls feels very large to me compared to my hometown!
2. *Briefly introduce yourself.* I'm Sarah! I've been married to Alex for 2 years, and we have the best dog in the world, Nellie. We just moved to River Falls in September when Alex became a part of the music department at RFSD. I've been working in the RFSD for 4 years now, and really enjoy being a part of such a great community. My family is full of musicians, so holidays are a bit rowdy, but in the best of ways. I love spending time with Alex, Nellie, family and friends. I am also a big theatre fan and love to attend productions and live concerts. I don't actually have many hobbies, but I'm trying to change that, so I'm currently learning to sew and working on my cooking skills! I'm a work in progress :).
3. *How long have you been attending First Congregational Church?* Alex and I began attending First Congregational Church when I began my position as choir director, this August!
4. *What keeps you coming back to church at UCC?* There are so many things that keep us coming back to church at UCC. Alex and I had a difficult time transitioning away from my home church after we got married. Nothing seemed to fit... until we found UCC. The members have welcomed us with open arms since the day we arrived. We really needed a place to fit into when we moved to River Falls, and UCC became that place. We also like to make jokes when we leave church that Pastor Chris must be a mind reader because he was clearly speaking to us during his messages. The encouragement and love spoken each week is exactly what we need to hear. It rejuvenates our hearts for the week. We also keep coming back to UCC because we believe in the vision of the church. We see and experience so many great things happening in this church, and we feel blessed to be able to be a part of it.
5. *What is your favorite Bible passage, hymn and/or song?* My favorite Bible passage is Isaiah 40:28-31. I sang a piece in high school with the text, and it has given me strength in the most difficult times since. My favorite song is Silent Night because my family was able to sing it on Christmas Day surrounding my grandfather as his spirit left us to go be with Jesus.
6. *What is your favorite childhood memory?* My grandfather was a pastor, and growing up, he would let all 10 of us grandchildren play red light, green light in the church basement. Our parents always expected best behavior at church, but grandpa would let us tear apart the basement because he loved seeing us happy in the church. My cousins and I are all super close because of these memories.
7. *What is your favorite hobby or pastime?* I really enjoy bonfires. I love to sit around a fire in the summertime and talk with my family and friends.
8. *Tell us something about you or your family that may surprise us?* My favorite food in the whole world is green beans. I even specially asked our wedding caterer to create a side dish of green beans because there wasn't one on their menu, and I thought it'd be bad luck to not have them on our wedding day. I just really love green beans.
9. *What gives you comfort or joy during these Covid-19 days?* Spending time with my husband has given me great joy during the pandemic. There's no better way to get to know your spouse than to be trapped in a house with them for 6 months just shortly after getting married! Alex teaches me daily how to be kinder and more compassionate, and I've really valued the extra time at home to cherish one another. Also, Culver's concrete mixers have also provided great comfort during the stressful moments of the pandemic.





Relay for Life

It's back and in person. The **Relay for Life event will be April 1, 2022, held at the River Falls High School** and that's no joke. This year's theme is "Around the World - A World Without Cancer." Our church has been involved in this event for many years and has raised more than \$12,000. Help us this year to raise more dollars to assist the American Cancer Society lessen the fear of cancer.

Our team's first fundraiser is the Soup Night held Wednesday, February 16. Orders can be placed online, on the signup sheet at the signup table, or through the office. Please sign up by noon February 15. To support and learn more about our Soup Night, check out the Wednesday Meal announcement.

The Relay for Life Event held April 1 is a community event. It begins at 5:30 pm with the Spaghetti Dinner and then the Survivor Walk at 6:00 pm. Other highlights are the Luminary Hour at 9:30 pm with the announcement of "in honor of" or "in memory of" people affected by cancer and the Silent Auction. More details to be shared soon.

More information on opportunities to donate and chances to be involved are coming up. Also, please join our team and share the gratification of helping people in need. To be a member of our team or if you have questions, contact Deb Hoffman, 612-308-4945. Thank you in advance for all your help and support.

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. 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. Last quarter the church received over \$75 for this account, but that amount could grow greatly if you add the church to your Amazon account. Do it today!

Simpson Shelter Needs

- Twin, full, and queen size blankets and sheet sets—new
 - Pillows—new
 - White t-shirts—new, sizes small & 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

	Dec 31, 2021
General Fund Income*	\$ 470,870.06
General Fund Expenses	<u>\$ 470,204.25</u>
2021 Net Income	<u>\$ 665.81</u>
	Feb 6, 2022
General Fund Income*	<u>\$ 84,427.45</u>

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

A new budget will be approved at the February 6th Annual Meeting.

Church Staff Contact Info

Pastor: Chris Myers—chris@firstchurchrf.org
 Office: Missy Luedtke—missy@firstchurchrf.org
 Education: Stacy Myers—stacy@firstchurchrf.org
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First Communion Information for Parents

When do children at First Congregational Church begin taking Communion?

There is no uniform age at First Congregational Church when children begin participating in the Lord's Supper. Some children are pre-school age, others are in elementary school, and some wait until confirmation to begin taking Communion. The Bible and church history do not give decisive guidelines about the age to begin celebrating the Lord's Supper. The decision about when people are welcome at the Lord's Table has largely been made by local worshipping communities. Our practice is to include children when they and their parents think they are ready to participate.

How will I know when my child is ready?

Some parents choose infant communion for their children. Many parents wait until their children express an interest. Typically, children are ready to participate in Communion when they start asking questions about this sacrament. One important theme of Communion is inclusion: All are welcome at the table of the Lord. If a child feels excluded, it is a good time for that child to begin participating.

My child does not yet receive Communion. Should she/he still come forward?

Yes, all people are invited to come forward to the servers at the Communion distribution time. Children who will not be communing should keep their hands folded (as opposed to reaching out). This is a signal to the pastor and deacons that the child desires a blessing.

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."