

Weekly Word – For Sunday, December 18, 2022

Worship this Sunday:

This Sunday the church children present their Christmas Program: Stars! Angels! Shepherds! Kings! Join us for and heartwarming story during the 10am worship service. Remember when you were a part of the church program and how everyone enjoyed it? Now it is your turn to come and support our young people on this Fourth Sunday of Advent. During Coffee Fellowship afterward we will enjoy both donuts from St B's and cookies decorated by our Middle School Youth. Join us!

Link to Livestream Worship: <https://youtu.be/YeRAEwrt-Rc>

Sunday Bulletin

Children's Advent Musical Rehearsal will be **Saturday, December 17, from 10:00–12:00 noon for children in grades 1–5**. Pre-Schoolers and Kindergarteners do not need to attend the rehearsal. The musical will be presented during worship on **Sunday, December 18**.

This Week

Sun., Dec 18	9:00-9:45 am	Sunday Morning Text Study in the Youth Room
	9:45-11:15 am	Nursery Open
	10:00-11:00 am	Worship Service in the Sanctuary & Livestream – Children's Advent Musical
	11:00-11:30 am	Coffee Fellowship in the Fellowship Hall
	11:00-11:30 am	WEVR Broadcast 106.3 FM
Tues., Dec 20	9:00 am-2:00 pm	Among Friends
Wed., Dec 21	3:45-5:15 pm	Wednesday School
	5:15-6:15 pm	Wednesday Meal
	5:45-6:30 pm	Jubilee Ringers
	6:30-7:00 pm	Advent Evening Prayer
	6:30-7:30 pm	Pre-Confirmation (Start in Worship)
	6:30-7:30 pm	Confirmation Years 1 & 2 (Start in Worship)
	6:30-7:30 pm	High School Youth Group (Start in Worship)
	7:00-8:00 pm	Chancel Choir
	Sat., Dec 24	4:00-5:00 pm
11:00 am-12:00 pm		Carol and Candles, Choir and Communion Worship
Sun., Dec 25	8:45-9:45 am	Music Rehearsal in the Sanctuary
	9:45-11:15 am	Nursery Open
	10:00-11:00 am	Worship Service in the Sanctuary and Livestream
	11:00-11:30 am	Coffee Fellowship in the Fellowship Hall
	11:00-11:30 am	WEVR Broadcast 106.3 FM

Assisting in Sunday's worship service are:

Preacher:	Christmas Program
Celebrant:	Chris Myers
Cantor:	David Reilly
Liturgist:	Sue Danielson
Deacons:	Cindy Gandrud, Karen Lloyd, Peter and Natasha Rayne, Jena Most
Organist:	Terry Mithun
Nursery:	Kahla Fuller
Live Stream:	Mike Stifter
Trustee:	Allen Barnes
Coffee Fellowship:	Kathy and Beth Rausch
Counters:	Jane Truesdill, Trish Graves

Altar table flowers are given by Karri Van Dell in memory of Peggy Thompson.

URGENT: Two Sunday School Teachers Needed: The Sunday School program is in critical need of two more Sunday School teachers. Teachers do not teach every week. Please consider volunteering. For more information or to volunteer, contact Pastor Stacy.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Worship Schedule

Saturday, December 24, Christmas Eve

Carols and Candles Family Worship at 4pm

Carol and Candles, Choir and Communion Worship at 11pm

Sunday, December 25, Christmas Day

Worship at 10am with Festive Coffee Fellowship Following

Loving God

Advent Evening Prayer: Advent is about re-centering ourselves, to sharpen our ears and focus our attention on the work and way of life God calls us to. Evening Prayer is an excellent way to re-center yourself. Please join us for worship on **Wednesday, December 21 at 6:30–7:00 pm**. This brief service is lovely. It nourishes the soul.

2022 Advent Devotional: The Advent devotional resource for 2022 is a simple cardboard “tent” that will sit on your table during the Advent season. There is a scripture passage, questions to think about, and a prayer. Be sure to take home a resource and use it!

Sunday Morning Text Study: Sunday morning Bible text study is held at **9:00 am on Sundays**. Please join us for an engaging discussion of the texts. All are welcome! **Please note: The Adult Forum will not meet on December 25 or January 1.**

Adult Bible Study: Adult Bible Study is held on **Wednesday afternoons 1:00–2:30 pm** in the Youth Room. The group will begin a new study in early January, so that is a good time to welcome new participants. For more information, talk with Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

Reverse Advent Calendar: Each day in Advent, congregation members are encouraged to add an item of food for the River Falls Food Pantry then bring the completed items in a shopping bag to worship on or after Christmas Eve or Christmas Day worship. Extra copies of the list and shopping bags are available at church.

Christmas Shoebox 2022: “I love this author!” “I have gloves, I have socks, I’m happy!” “This community is so wonderful!” “Thank you so much!” Those were just a few of the many comments from the gentlemen at the Kinnic Falls Rehab Center, when they opened their shoeboxes and Christmas bags. That says to me that this small project gives so much more than we even realize. So I just want to say “Thank you” for all of the support you give to this project. From the Wednesday School kids decorating the bags, to the youth who wrapped the boxes, to the yoga group who filled those boxes, to the wonderful group of ladies that baked and decorated Christmas cookies so each guy received his own plateful! Last but not least, thank you to the congregation for your generosity in either cash donations or purchasing the items requested. It does take a village and all of you are very much a part of this one. One last, personal thank you to Marie Roe for being my partner in helping coordinate this year. Blessings, Jean Smith

Among Friends is a community-based social respite program serving adults who have memory loss who reside in Pierce and St. Croix Counties. For more information, contact them at (715) 293-2651. Check out the website: amongfriendsrf.com and Facebook page. It is held at the church on **Tuesdays 9am to 2pm**.

Volunteer Opportunities at Among Friends: Volunteer needed on Tuesdays to provide transportation for two female participants who live in Hudson. Clients could be picked up at 9:00 am and returned home at 2:00 pm. Mileage reimbursement would be provided. Also, need a volunteer to set up for lunch and do dishes from 11:30 am–12:30 pm. For information, call Norma at (651) 260-5725.

Loving Self

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve: Poinsettia sales “In Honor of” or “In Memory of” someone special has begun. The order forms are on the sign-up table or call the church office. The cost is \$15.00 each. Please return the order form with payment by **December 18**. The plants will be on display for the Christmas Eve services. You may pick your plants up after the 11:00 pm service on Christmas Eve. Proceeds of the sales go toward youth activities.

Wednesday Meals: On Wednesday nights we offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$8 per person with a family max of \$30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:15 pm.** We will not be offering drive thru service this year, but you may go through the serving line and a meal will be packaged for you to take home. **Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays.**

Dec 21 - Chicken Marsala, rice, asparagus, choc strawberries

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-wednesday49>

Men’s Group: The church Men’s Group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am** for coffee, treats and conversation. Pastor Chris leads us with a brief devotion and gives us a topic to discuss. **We will be off on December 27 and will meet again on January 10.** All men are welcome!

Merry Widows: The Merry Widows will meet on **Wednesday, December 21 at the West Wind in River Falls at 1pm.** All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

Cribbage Night: The group meets on the second Monday at the church. Players are asked to donate \$2 which is given to a charity. Playing time starts at **7:00 pm.** All players welcome. The next game will be **January 9.**

Church Yoga: Yoga will not be meeting on December 20, 22, 27 and 29. **They will begin again Tuesday, January 3 from 9:00 to 10:00 am with the luncheon to be held after.**

Inquirer’s Class: Want to know more about First Congregational Church? Join us on **Tuesday, January 24 at 6:30 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. In this 90-minute gathering, you will meet other new folks, church leaders as well as get an overview of the church’s mission and ministry. After introductions and a tour of the church building, dessert will be served as church leaders share information about the church. Those who complete the class and wish to join the church as members will be received into church membership in February. Join us!

Boundary Waters Trip: If you are interested in a Boundary Waters trip this summer, Alex is collecting a sign-up list to begin planning! Please list the full names of everyone interested, a phone number, and an email address for further communication. The current dates we are looking at are July 16-20, 2023, but there might be some flexibility on the dates depending on availability and the sooner we collect interest. Due to interest, we may need 4-6 adults if we need to separate into two groups. The max permit size is 9 people per group. If you are interested in leading a group, please indicate so when you sign up! Permits need to be obtained in mid-January to reserve our summer dates, so an initial down payment will be collected in January to reserve your spot.

Civil Rights Pilgrimage: Our church has a history of pilgrimage trips. In addition to the bi-annual mission trip to Back Bay Mission, our youth head to Boston to learn more about both their Congregational Church heritage and our nation’s history. We also have led a Holy Land Pilgrimage to learn more about the biblical roots of our faith. This fall we will add a new experience - A Civil Rights Pilgrimage. This 5-day pilgrimage will include stops in Atlanta, Birmingham, Selma and Montgomery. We will literally be walking in the steps of history to learn more about our country and our Christian faith. There will also be time to enjoy southern cuisine! **The trip will take place October 25-29, 2023, and an informational meeting will be held Sunday, January 22 from 11:15 am to Noon in the Youth Room.** Please contact Pastor Chris for info and use the sign-up sheet to register your interest. Space is limited to 15 people.

Youth Group News

Wed, Dec 21, 6:30 pm - HS Youth Group Christmas Cookie Decorating: Please sign up so we can have enough supplies. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-high4>

Sun, Jan 15 - Badlands Snow Tubing 1:30-4:30 pm: Please sign up.
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-youth3>

Winter Retreat for High Schoolers – Jan 27-29: All high school youth are invited to join Alex for an awesome winter retreat at ARC retreat center in Osceola, WI. We leave Friday afternoon, spend all day Saturday at the retreat center, then leave early on Sunday to return home and help lead worship. The date is Friday, January 27 to Sunday, January 29. The retreat center offers tubing, an indoor gym, human football, and lots of other fun activities. Cost is \$75 per person for pledging families. We are excited to resume this retreat after a two-year absence! Sign up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-winter>

Sign Ups

Coffee Fellowship Hosts Needed: Please sign up to help host and serve. Everything you need is provided, you just need to get there a little early to get things ready, serve and do a quick clean up. Sign up at church or here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-coffee>

Liturgists Needed: Please sign up to be a Sunday liturgist. You will lead us in the Call to Worship and a Scripture text. The bulletin will be sent via email to you on Thursday. Sign up at church or here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-liturgist>

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 & one person is needed at the ramp entrance. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to the service. Sign up at church or here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-welcomers>

Altar Table Flowers: Please sign up to provide flowers for the altar for Sunday worship. Sign up at church or here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-altar>

Church App: The church has a mobile phone app. You can download it from the church website or by scanning the QR Code found on a flyer on the sign-up table and Facebook.



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 the tab 'Give Online'

Finances

THANK YOU to all of you for your support of the mission and ministry of our church through your tithes, offerings, and gifts. Your generosity empowers our church! Please be sure to sign up for e-giving or mail/drop off your gifts. There is also now an option to give online via our church website.

	<u>Dec 11, 2022</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 9,356	\$ 468,027
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,909	\$ 495,450

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

Note: We are behind in our financial giving. Please consider making an additional gift to fund the ministries, programs, and outreach of the church. All the items you see in this announcement page are accomplished through your generous support. Please help us fully fund our church.

Do you Smile? Do you Amazon Smile? - Did you know the church has received nearly \$500 from Amazon through its Amazon Smiles charity program? It is fast, free and easy to set up. If you have an Amazon account go to smile.amazon.com and register First Congregational Church of River Falls. Then each quarter the church will receive a small portion of total amazon shopping. Start smiling today!

Mortgage Summary – As of November 30, 2022

Original cost of Facilities Expansion Project	\$2,386,970.00
Remaining amount on Bank Loan	\$279,776.19
Cash on hand in the Building Fund	\$222,664.06
Interest Rate (Locked in through January 2027)	3.39%
Monthly Payment	\$2,622.76

People

- For the gift of our young people presenting their Christmas Program today, may it fill us with wonder
- For Jean Smith and all who supported the Shoe Box Ministry to the men at the Kinnic Drug and Alcohol Rehab program, may it bring Christ's love to all of us
- For the Men's Group who made sandwiches for the Simpson Shelter, and Dave Reilly who made soup, all of which was brought to the shelter by Carole Mottaz in the snowstorm
- For Randy and Diane Welsh who directed the Angels on Earth Giving Tree and for all the families it blessed
- For Lu Lueck and her grandson Brody who planted and potted this year's Amaryllis plants for our shut-ins, bless you.
- For the two beautiful Christmas trees from Linn Lawrence's family farm put up by Tim Bylander and Farnum Fuller, may they kindle joy in all of us
- For Laura and Mark Anderson who arranged the flowerpots outside the church entrance, they are beautiful!

Do you have upcoming news or celebrations to share with the congregation? Graduations? Birthdays 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. 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 office at office@firstchurchrf.org

Church Office Hours:

Monday through Thursday – 8:30 am to 4:00 pm

Friday – 8:30 am to 12:00 pm

Church Staff Contact:

Church Office - 715-425-2052

Pastor: Chris Myers - chris@firstchurchrf.org

Minister for Community and Outreach: Deb Meyer – deb@firstchurchrf.org

Education: Stacy Johnson Myers - stacy@firstchurchrf.org

Youth: Alex and Sarah Plum – rfyouthgroup@gmail.com

Office/Finance: Missy Luedtke - missy@firstchurchrf.org

Music: Jamie Mills - degolierjamie@gmail.com

Choir: Sarah Plum – sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com

Building: Farnum Fuller – farnumfuller@gmail.com

Maintenance: Tim Bylander - timthefixitguy@gmail.com