



# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://www.firstchurchrf.org)

June 1, 2023

*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

I heard someone talking about the differences between churches and he said for him basically there were three kinds of churches. The first kind is the 'I'm ok, but you are not ok kind of church.' These are the ones who love to point out the sin and failing of others. They, the elect, the chosen, the true followers of Jesus, are ok, but those people, you people, you are not ok. I'm ok, but you are not ok kind of church.

A second kind of church is the 'I'm ok and you're ok kind of church,' which sounds great, right? Better than the first kind. But the truth is somedays we are not ok. If I'm ok and your ok, when is it ok for us to not be ok? To struggle. To feel lost. Overwhelmed. In I'm ok, you're ok churches, it is hard to have deep conversations because you can't be real, you can't be authentic.

So the third kind of church is the 'I'm not ok and your not ok' kind of church, which sounds kind of strange, right? God wants all of us to have a deep and abundant life, John 10:10. God wants all of us to love God, love our neighbor and love ourselves, Matthew 22. But sometimes its hard to do that. We need churches that are brave enough and faithful enough in both worship and in our relationships to acknowledge that we are all broken at some level. We are all struggling, not ok. And since I'm not ok and your not ok, together maybe we can look to God's Word, follow in Jesus' way, receive the Holy Spirit, so that together, together we will get not just to ok, but to the abundant life God wants for all of us.

A shift from heaven to earth, a shift from gazing only at God, to looking out for neighbors, and a shift from only thinking about us and ourselves, to thinking about others. These are the gifts Jesus

leaves in his wake as he ascends into heaven. These are ways we are called to follow him today. These are gifts that will help us in our mission to be God's faithful people today. It is such good news it is worth singing about.

*Excerpt from sermon preached on  
Sunday May, 21*



## Graduation Sunday

Some of the most exciting moments

of the church year are those Sundays when we celebrate our graduates. We will be celebrating Graduation Sunday on June 4. We invite our graduating high school seniors to join us wearing their graduation robes. Following the 9:30 am worship service (summer worship hours!), they will be honored with a cake reception, leaving them plenty of time to get to River Falls High School for the graduation ceremony. Please make sure you have completed the Graduation Plans Form and returned it to the church office! Link: <https://firstchurchrf.org/pages/sign-up-sheets>

Also, if you are graduating from college, please let us know where you are graduating from, your major/degree and any future plans so we can include that on Graduation Sunday as well ([office@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:office@firstchurchrf.org)).

# Baccalaureate Celebrating Our 2023 High School Graduates



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## Scholarships

Just a reminder that all those who submitted applications for Senior High School or Continuing Education Scholarships should plan on being in worship to receive their awards on Graduation Sunday, June 4, at 9:30 am. Please see Jenny Luedtke, chair of the Scholarship Team, with any questions.

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## Summer Nursery Help Needed

During the summer months, our church nursery is staffed by volunteers. Please sign up to help. Summer worship time moves to 9:30 am and the nursery is open from 9:15 to 10:45 am. Use the sign-up sheets at church or online. Please contact the church office for more information.

## Video Team Members Needed

Each week the church livestreams the worship service. This vital ministry is run by volunteers Jeff Hoffman and Ryan Luedtke. We are in need of 2 more adults and 1 youth who want to be part of this team. Training is provided and you will join a rotation to fit your schedule. Contact the office for more details and to sign up.

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## School Year Programming Has Ended

All of our school year educational programs have drawn to a close. Sunday School, Wednesday School, Confirmation, Church Interns, Adult Bible Study, and the Adult Forum/Sunday Bible Study will resume in the fall.

# THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

## Sunday School Teachers

Another Sunday School year has ended. The entire congregation owes a significant debt of gratitude to all those who teach in the Sunday School program. Without teachers to spend time with children, Sunday School would not be possible. Many, many thanks to: Kaye Anderson, George Beatty, Susan Beatty, Jennie Friese, Kathryn Hector, Kim Korent, Christina Krueger, Sarah Meyer, Carole Mottaz, Stacy Myers, Becky Pajac, Natasha Rayne, Ella Shepherd, Mara Shepherd, Kathy Tomlinson, Ann Tuveson, and Christina Treu.

### Vacation Bible School



VBS in 2023 will be: “The World When Jesus Lived.” It will be held **July 31–August 3, 9:00–11:30 am**, and is open to all children age 3 through completed grade 5.

We need more adults and teen-aged volunteers. Registration forms for students and sign-up sheets to help are all on the church website under the ‘connect’ button or available at church. Please register and invite friends, relatives, and neighbors to participate.

### Summer Kids’ Musical:

#### *Oh, Jonah!*

Following a several-year hiatus, we will again have a children’s musical in July for children who have completed kindergarten through grade 6. The show is “Oh, Jonah!” and tells the Old Testament story of Jonah and the whale. Rehearsals are **July 17–20, 9:00–noon**. The performance will be July 20 and will include dinner.

Registrations are available online or at church. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

### Please Save Oatmeal Containers

Please save oatmeal containers (large and small sizes) that are the traditional rounded style. Please empty completely, save the plastic cover, and bring to church. Thanks!

### River Falls Days Kick Off Concert

On **Thursday, July 13**, join us out on the lawn for another concert with the Slapdash Bluegrass Band! There will be a food truck with food to purchase, plus free drinks and treats. In case of bad weather, it will move inside the Fellowship Hall. Join us as we kick off River Falls Days weekend!

### Prayers of Thanksgiving

- For the birth Dean Thomas Wilhelmy, son of new members Mason and Heidi, who was born on May 18 at 8lbs 7oz, 21 inches, may you all grow in faith and love.
- For Marjorie Faulks as she approaches her 100th birthday on June 14, may God continue to bless and keep her in strength.
- For our graduating High School seniors who were honored at Baccalaureate at RFHS, may God continue to send people into your life to guide and direct you.
- For local families benefiting from the diaper drive sponsored by our Mission Team as a way to honor our parents (collecting between Mother’s Day and Father’s Day).
- For our church mowing team Ryan Luedtke, Joel Larsen, Larry Peterson and Cheyenne Wilson, thank you!



## Diaper Drive

Mission Education is collecting children’s diapers and wipes to United Way as a way to honor the mothers and fathers in our lives. Diaper bins are located in the

Gathering Area from Mother’s Day and on to Father’s Day. You can take a small card to let the good parents in your life know that you’re thinking of them by helping other parents who need some extra assistance. Here is what the United Way St. Croix Valley wants us to know:

*One in 3 families in our area struggles to meet the basic needs for their family. Food shelves report an increase in need across the state – and diapers are one of the most requested non-food items. Diapers and other hygiene items cannot be purchased with SNAP (food stamps) or any other state- or federally-funded safety net programs. Parents are often forced to ration their diaper supply, endangering the health of their children and making it impossible to enroll their children in childcare so that the parents can work. United Way St Croix Valley is responding by launching new and supporting existing diaper pantries in the St Croix Valley. All children deserve to be loved, cared for, and have their basic needs met. All parents who request assistance will be served by the United Way.*

Any and all sizes of disposable diapers are needed, but the most requested sizes are the larger ones, 4, 5 and 6, since children wear them for the longest period of time. Look for the sales and give generously!

## Green Team

Are you interested in learning how to live more sustainably? Are you thankful for the gift of God’s good creation and want to help care for it better? Join the Green Team! Register your interest on the sign-up sheet and we will connect together to help ourselves and others live better. See Barb Peterson or Pastor Deb for more information.

## Hope for Creation Summer Social

Join us on **Thursday, June 8 at 6:00 pm at the East Side Shelter in Glen Park** as Hope For Creation sponsors a summer social with a free meal and refreshments. H4C is an ecumenical group of churches working to grow in our care of God’s creation. See Barb Peterson for more info. Join us!

## What the Pastor is Reading

The Story of Russia by Orlando Figes

I ran across this at the library in the new section. It is a short (300 pages) introduction to the history of a very old country, Russia. He does an amazing job of connecting past history with what is going on in Russia, Ukraine and much of Europe today. A fascinating read.

Genesis for Normal People: A Guide to the Most Controversial, Misunderstood and Abused Book of the Bible (from the Bible for Normal People Series) by Peter Enns and Jared Byas

I’ve read this author before. He is a great Old Testament scholar and wants to help modern people understand the book of Genesis as God’s Word not a science book or text book.



## Birthday Celebration

Marge Faulks will be turning 100 on June 14th (Flag Day). Coffee Fellowship on June 11th will be in her honor. Her family is also hosting a party for her on **June 18th from 1-5 pm at St Croix Lanes** in River Falls. Please come and help her celebrate! (No gifts, please.)



## Softball News

The season begins on Monday, June 5! Practices are at the Greenwood School ball fields. Someone will be in the parking lot with directions. If you are interested in playing, please sign up. If you have questions, contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, [debhoffman234b@gmail.com](mailto:debhoffman234b@gmail.com) or Sarah Plum at (715) 418-9393, [sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com).



## Endowment Grants

Each quarter the Endowment Grant Committee meets to evaluate proposals for new ministries and projects submitted through our church committees. Does your group have a new idea you want to pursue? Is there a need in the church or community your group wants to address? Consider applying for an Endowment Grant! The group has \$12,400 to award this year. All proposals must come from a committee and the dates for submission are: **June 18, September 17, December 10**. Forms can be accessed through the church office or on the church website under ‘connect’ then ‘forms’ tabs.

### Second Holy Land Tour

In 2019, 24 people from church participated in a Holy Land Tour to visit important places in our Christian faith like Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Galilee. We also learned about the cultural and political struggle between Jews and Palestinians and how the three great religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam literally converge in Jerusalem. Planning this tour took a long time. Pastor Chris is in the beginning stages of planning another Holy Land Tour. A date has not been announced, but if you want to be kept in the loop about developments and involved in determining the timing of a trip, please use the sign-up sheets to register your interest.

### 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**. Space is limited to 14 people and an outline of the proposed itinerary is available from Pastor Chris. Act fast as spaces are going quickly.

### Current Capital Campaign

Total Pledged	\$596,646.00
Total Received to Date	<u>395,413.72</u>
Remaining Balance	\$201,232.28

### Mortgage Summary—As of May 15, 2023

Original Cost of Facilities Expansion Project	\$2,386,970.00
Remaining Amount on Bank Loan	\$189,955.30
Interest Rate (Locked in through January 2027)	3.39%
Monthly Payment	\$2,622.76

Our current three-year capital campaign began June 2022 and will end in May 2025. It will eliminate our bank loan, fund a new church sign and upgrades to audio visual capabilities in the church building. Thank you for your generous support of our church and its ministry!

## Treasurer’s Report

	Week of	
	<u>May 21, 2023</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 8,684	\$ 226,714
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,268	\$ 215,628

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

\*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

### Church Staff Contact Info

Pastor: Chris Myers—[chris@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org)  
 Education: Stacy Myers—[stacy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:stacy@firstchurchrf.org)  
 Mission: Deb Meyer—[deb@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:deb@firstchurchrf.org)  
 Office: Missy Luedtke—[missy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:missy@firstchurchrf.org)  
 Youth: Alex and Sarah Plum—[rfyouthgroup@gmail.com](mailto:rfyouthgroup@gmail.com)  
 Music: Jamie Mills—[degolierjamie@gmail.com](mailto:degolierjamie@gmail.com)  
 Choir: Sarah Plum—[sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com)  
 Building: Farnum Fuller—[farnumfuller@gmail.com](mailto:farnumfuller@gmail.com)  
 Maintenance: Tim Bylander—[timthefixitguy@gmail.com](mailto:timthefixitguy@gmail.com)

## CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

May 16, 2023

Treasurer's Report – In review of the April accounts, there were additional expenses paid out: 1/2 of the annual insurance premium was paid, 1/4 of the annual budgeted missions were paid. Several people paid the full amount of their annual pledge. That has been very helpful. The gas and electric budget amounts were adjusted and lowered. Brad is working on the garbage contract to lower that expense as well.

### **New Business:**

Committee Descriptions and Calendars—Thanks to all the committees who have submitted theirs.

Nominating—Need new people by September 19th. Council members previewed the committees and boards list.

Members to review the list and submit committee member renewals and how many new members they will need.

### **Old Business:**

Emergency Response Team—Linn L, Laura A, Scott, Jeff, Chris, Marie, Matt C, Justin W—Met for a meeting. In contact with the Chief of Police to meet with them. The Fire Dept provided recommendations for safety items.

Reports and Accounting—Chris met with a new person for consideration. The individual will meet with Brad to review the on-line accounting tools.

Capital Campaign Updates—Sign—Tim B, Louie F, Chris M, Kathy R, Andy K—No updates. Sound—Joel L, Alex P, Marsha P, Jeff H, Dave R, Chris M—Meeting occurred. Vendors have been identified and they will complete a tour to review the needs of the building and provide estimates.

Roof Update—Flat roof work has begun.

### **Ministry Updates:**

Christian Education—Reviewed the program year. Two summer programs are being planned—VBS, Musical.

Graduation blankets completed. Revision of Confirmation program, recommend using Wednesday meal time to also complete reading in preparation for Confirmation class. In support of local Lay Academy—Planned for fall.

Deacons—Completed their committee descriptions and calendar. Plan to organize Sacristy as their summer project.

Name tag board done this week. Request made to invest in acoustic panels to be installed in the fellowship hall to help with the hearing impaired to be able to hear better during large group events. Information provided to Trustees/Louie.

Endowment Grant—Next deadline is June 18th. Funds are available.

Mission Education—Finalized mission statement. WISE team is getting organized with the first meeting next Tuesday.

Diaper Drive is going on this time. Steve McCarthy—Mission moment on Father's Day. Veteran's Lunch on May 28th.

Music—Food truck is hired for the bluegrass concert in July (street tacos and baked potatoes). Two other concerts are being planned for the summer. Need host families for several of the musicians the July 30th weekend.

Trustees—Tim reports deterioration of the bricks in the older section of the church. A large chunk fell off the building.

Will determine cost and repair process and will be worked on over several years. Fridge monitor is in use and connected to Tim's phone. Spring clean up had good turn out with the garden crew. Creating a standard schedule for the annual cleaning outside/inside days for the Trustees. Applied for an endowment grant fund to start a seed fund towards a new tractor.

Welcoming Ministry—No report

Pastor—A Memorial gathering will be held on Wednesday, May 31st, 4-6 pm for Donna Moseman. Confirmation Sunday was held on May 7th. Seven students were confirmed. Graduation Sunday will be held on June 4th. There will be five intern seniors and up to 11 graduating seniors. Pastor Deb led a Women's Bible Study with 13 participants. She is also leading our monthly Wellhaven gathering. We will be holding a local Lay Academy here at the church in the fall. The next Endowment Grant deadline is on June 18th. Services will begin at 9:30 am starting Memorial Day weekend.

Moderator—Reminder that the committee descriptions are to be completed and information for the nominating committee needs to be submitted.

NEXT MEETING: Note there is no Council meeting in June or July. We meet on August 15th.

Submitted by Jo Anne Friedell, Clerk

# SERVE generously

## Simpson Shelter Needs

- Women's bras—all sizes
- Women's white crew socks
- Shower shoes—all sizes
- Men's t-shirts—sizes XL, XXL, XXXL
- Personal size Vaseline
- Personal size body wash and shampoo
- Sunscreen
- Nail care products
- Women's briefs—size 5, 6

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

## 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.

## Empty Pill Bottles (Prescription Only)

The River Falls Lions Club is collecting empty pill bottles, prescription only, to send to Africa where there is an urgent need. The bottles will be washed, and the labels soaked off before they are shipped. A blue collection tub is in the gathering area. Please see Carole Mottaz with questions.

## Merry Widows

They will meet **Tues., June 20 at 1:00 pm** at **The Valley**, on Hwy 10 between Prescott and Ellsworth. All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

## Church Yoga

The 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.

## Cribbage

The group is taking a break for summer and will start back up on the second Monday in September. The group gave their donations of \$146 to the River Falls Food Pantry.

## Men's Group

The church Men's Group meets every other Tuesday from 9:00–10:00 am for coffee, treats and conversation. They are on summer break until September.

**Family Fresh** has discontinued their program of collecting receipts. Thank you for your support!



## Offering QR Code

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



## Among Friends

Among Friends is a community-based social respite program serving adults with memory loss who reside in Pierce and St. Croix Counties. For more information, contact them at 715-293-2561. Also, check out the website: [amongfriendsrf.com](http://amongfriendsrf.com) and the Facebook page. Among Friends is located at the church and is held on **Tuesdays from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm**.



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RIVER FALLS

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  
Stacy Johnson, CE Minister  
Deb Meyer, Minister for Community and Outreach  
Missy Luedtke, Office Administrator  
Kathy Rausch, Moderator  
Alex and Sarah Plum, Youth Ministers  
Jamie Mills, Music Coordinator and Bell Choir Director  
Sarah Plum, Choir Director  
Marsha Pearson, Organist  
Terry Mithun, Organist  
Tim Bylander, Building Supervisor  
Farnum Fuller, Custodian  
  
Pastor's home phone number:  
Chris Myers 715-426-2075  
[chris@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org)

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**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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JUNE 1, 2023  
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## 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 & one person is needed at the ramp entrance. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to worship. Sign up at church or here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-welcomers>

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## 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. Sign up at church or on the 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 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.

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## Newsletter Deadlines

The church newsletter is sent out twice a month. Deadlines are the 10th and 25th of each month. Items should be sent to the church office no later than those dates.