First Congregational Church, UCC

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

July 15, 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

Reflections on 20 years

So where were you twenty years ago? What were you doing? Where were you living? What was life like? What brought you joy and sorrow? I remember exactly what I was doing twenty years ago as this month marks the twentieth anniversary of my arrival in River Falls as pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ of River Falls. Twenty years. Let that number sink in a little.

The fact of the matter is this church has a history of long pastorates. My predecessor, Del Permann, served here for over 19 years. Dick Hoblin before him served over 12 years. This is no small thing when the average pastorate is now less than four years (this is not a typo).

A lot has changed over these past twenty years. How we communicate with each other has changed dramatically. I remember when we set up our first church website and Facebook page. I remember a very slow and messy copy machine (plus we still had a mimeograph machine as well!). I remember a church office with a small counter and crowded spaces. I remember a Giving Thanks Meal in a crowded Fellowship Hall in the church basement and a kitchen that was full of workers trying to keep the dishwasher (used from the old River Falls Hospital) from overflowing. Now we have an expanded building and instead of just a once a month newsletter, we have instant email blasts, Facebook posts, the Weekly Word email newsletter in addition to the printed biweekly newsletter.

Some things have not changed. We remain committed to our community hosting everything from concerts to School Supply Give Aways, Diaper Drives to Simpson Shelter Meals. We remain committed to our young people providing youth groups, confirmation, Sunday and Wednesday School programs, mission trips and the Boston Trip through the work of people like Pastors Beth Faeth and Stacy.

We remain committed to our elders through things like the Among Friends program for families with dementia and Care Givers through the long hard work of people like Lu Lueck, Pastors Dave and Deb. We remain committed to worship and music by hosting the only regularly singing church choir left in River Falls, providing a variety of musical styles from traditional to contemporary to most recently Bluegrass.

We remain committed to standing up for the lonely and outcast in our community from our sponsorship of refugee families to the Shoe Box Ministry to men in rehab at the Kinnic Alcohol and Drug rehab program. We remain committed to being good stewards of our resources and environment through the work of our Endowment Fund, Solar Panels and Green Team.

Most of all, we remain committed to serving in Jesus' name, called to be a part of his body at work in concrete and tangible ways in the world today.

Thank you for the work we have accomplished together these past twenty years. And in a spirit of humility, I also ask for your forgiveness for the ways I have failed you.

Continued on page 2

Pastor's Page *Continued from page 1*

God has graced this congregation with so many talented and faithful people who have courageously used their spiritual gifts in service the Living God. From moderators to committee members, from people who teach Sunday School to those who serve funeral meals, from church staff to our many volunteers, from those who worship in our pews to those who play on our church softball team, from those who worship with us every week in person to those who join us online and on the radio, every week we continue to be a hopeful light of grace and peace, justice and healing in a world that needs more of all these things.

The good news is that God is not done with us yet. God is still at work molding and shaping us, marinating us in the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. As our ancestors in the faith once prayed: *For I am very confident the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of His holy Word."*

In Gratitude, Pastor Chris

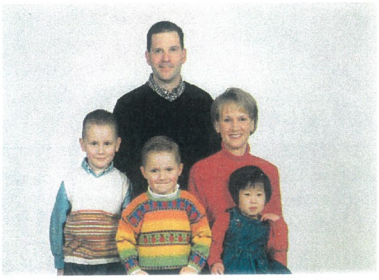
Schedule of Events

Saturday, March 22, 2003

*Open House for Rev. Myers and family Church Sanctuary 1:00-3:00p.m.

Sunday, March 23, 2003

*Coffee Fellowship at 9:00 a.m.
*Worship service at 10:00 a.m. with the sermon and liturgy by Reverend Christopher Myers
*Special Meeting of the Congregation following Worship, and Vote to Call
*Luncheon to follow the meeting



Reverand Chris and Stacy Myers
Andrew 5, Matthew 3, Katy 1

Personal Note from Chris

Greetings! I am pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself to the people of the First Congregational Church-United Church of Christ in River Falls. This church has a long history of outreach toward the local community and the world around it. As your pastor I look forward to building upon the significant accomplishments of the past as well as preparing for the future. River Falls will be going through some challenges as the community grows and changes. If is my hope that we can partner together to expand and enhance our common ministry.

My family has been impressed with the city of River Falls, the graciousness of the call committee and the eagerness of the church staff. This is an exciting time in the life of this church and we are looking forward to being a part of it.

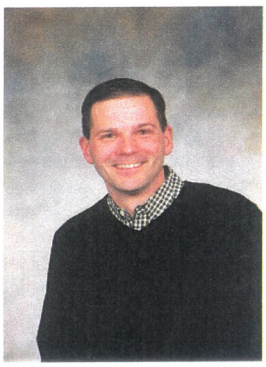
The Call Committee

Jim Anderson
Ray Anderson
Katie Fuller
Suzanne Hagen
Dave Hallstrom
Jeff Hoffman
Karl Hussey
Gwen Kuchevar*
Carol Merlman
Bob Phillipps
Alan Tucthtenhagen

*chair of the committee

First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ
River Falls, WI



The Call Committee is pleased to introduce

The Reverend Christopher Myers

Our unanimous recommendation for Senior Minster at the First Congregational Church.

Night of Dinner/Theater

You are invited to a night of dinner and a show on **Thursday, July 20**. A family-friendly meal will be served starting at **6:00 pm**. Following the dinner will be the main feature: the musical "Oh, Jonah!" – you guessed it, the story of Jonah and the whale. The show has wonderful music, funny lines, and lots of great characterization.

Attending this event is a terrific way of supporting the young people in the congregation. Please come. You may sign the reservation list on the sign-up table, call the church office or use this link: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-summer3

Summer Kids' Musical: *Oh, Jonah!*

Students who have completed kindergarten through grade 6 are invited to participate in a children's musical program. Rehearsals are **July 17–20, 9:00–noon**. The performance will be July 20 and will include dinner. The show is "Oh, Jonah!" a wonderfully clever and fun show.

Registration form is available at church or online: https://firstchurchrf.org/grow/pages/vacation-bible-school. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Vacation Bible School 2023

Theme: "The World When Jesus Lived"
Dates and Time: July 31–August 3, 9:00–11:30 am
Ages: Age 3 through completed grade 5

We need ten more students to reach our minimum registration goal. Please invite your friends and neighbors to participate! Participating in VBS is a great way for families to be introduced to our church. Informational postcards are available on the sign-up table.

Registration form for students is at church or online: https://firstchurchrf.org/grow/pages/vacation-bible-school

VBS Volunteers

We still need a minimum of two more adults and three more teens willing to help in classrooms and with art projects. Please volunteer!

Sign up at church or online: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-vbsvolunteers2

VBS Volunteers Meeting

All VBS volunteers are asked to attend an orientation meeting on **Thursday, July 27, 6:00–7:00 pm**. In order to have a smooth VBS week, we need to be organized. This meeting is our organizational opportunity!

Fall Confirmation Orientation

The 2023 Confirmation Kick-Off will be **Wed., September 13, 6:30–7:30 pm**. This meeting is ***required*** for all confirmands (in grades 7–9) and parents. Please reserve the date and time now.

VBS Backdrop Painting

Please volunteer to help paint the backdrops for VBS. The big painting day will be **Tuesday, July 25, starting at 3:00 pm**. Please come! Painting will continue until 8:00 pm. Come for all or a portion of the time.

Excellent artistic skills are *not* required. Rather, the ability to paint inside the lines is the name of the game. To volunteer, please sign up at church or online: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-vbsdesign

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. We will use the oatmeal containers for a project this fall in Wednesday School. Thanks!

Last Call for Lost and Found

Missing a jacket? Hat? Water bottle? Book? Teeth? Just kidding on the last one, but wanted to see if you were paying attention. We have acquired lots of missing items in the Church Lost and Found area in the Gathering Area coat closet. Please check to see if you have any missing items there. After the end of July, all of them will be donated or tossed so we can get ready for VBS and the fall. Thank you!

Peach Fundraiser

It's time to place your order for the delicious Washington State Peaches!

The cost is: 1 single-layer box is $23.00; 2 single-layer boxes are $22.00 each; 3 or more single-layer boxes are $21.00 each. **REVISED: Orders must be placed by July 24 for pick up in early August.**

There are 3 ways to order:

1. Email office@firstchurchrf.org
2. Sign up at church or online: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-washington3
3. Call: 715-425-2052 – Mon-Thurs from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm or leave a message with name, phone and number of boxes.

This is an annual fundraiser for our youth. Thank you for your support!

Kayaking the Kinni: Kinni Kayak is giving us a great deal to kayak the upper or lower kinni for $10 each. They just need to know what date to set a reservation. Please email or text Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com or 612-224-5894 if you are interested. Alex will need a few adult chaperones as well. Please respond by July 16 so we can make the reservation!

Middle School Movie Night, August 9 at 6:30 pm: Any middle school aged students are welcome to come and watch a movie at church in the youth room! Alex will bring movie theater popcorn and snacks. Movie will be selected the night of. Please sign up here: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-middle15

Day Trip to the Cities: Alex is planning a day trip to the cities with the church van, including activities like renting group bikes at Minnehaha falls, eating at the global market, taking a tour of the Simpson Shelter, and mini golf and retro arcade. Alex is planning for a day during the first or second week of August. Please email/text Alex at rfyouthgroup@gmail.com or 612-224-5894 if you are interested and what days you are available!

Softball News

Our games are on Monday evenings at Hoffman Park in River Falls. Our next few games are:

July 17 at 7:45 pm vs. St. Bridget
July 24 at 6:30 pm vs. Abundant Life
July 31 at 7:45 pm vs. Luther
Aug 7 at 6:30 pm vs. Servant of the Shepherd

Come cheer us on and enjoy a great evening of summer fun!

If you have any questions, contact our co-managers Sarah Plum @ 715-418-9393 or Deb Hoffman @ 612-308-4945.

Thank You Note

I had a super time celebrating my 100 years of life. I want to thank Pastor Chris and my entire church family for the good wishes and helping me celebrate.

Thanks everyone! Marge Faulks

Once again this year we will be collecting school supplies for local families. As you are out shopping, please start collecting everything students might need this fall (crayons, pens, pencils, notebooks, backpacks, etc). Find a good deal? Buy lots! The School Supply Event we will **August 21—22** here at church. Typically we serve about 300 students. Thank you for your generous support of this needed local ministry.

WISE Team

The WISE Team will meet on:

Tuesday, July 25, from 6:30-8:00 pm

Blood Drive

The next scheduled Red Cross Blood Drive will be on **Friday, September 15, from 11:00 am–5:00 pm.** You can register at www.redcrossblood.org

People in the Pews: JoAnn M. Lentz

1. *Where did you grow up/hometown?* I am a native of LaCrosse, WI. Graduated from Aquinas HS, then my mother (a widow) moved the family of 3 daughters to what I considered a small town, Mondovi.
2. *Where do you live now?* I now live on a small hobby farm east of RF.
3. *How long have you been attending First Congregational Church?* I have been a member of First Congregational UCC church for 25 years, as the result of having Stewart Lentz, a member here, bringing me aboard.
4. *What keeps you coming back to church at First Congregational?* What keeps me coming back to this church is the people and the mission of the church. Getting involved is important to me as it gives me purpose.
5. *What is your favorite Bible passage, quote, or hymn. Why?* I like all the Bible passages and hymns.
6. *What is your favorite childhood memory?* My favorite childhood memory is spending a few days on my Uncle's farm playing with his 12 kids.
7. *What is your favorite hobby or pastime?* Favorite pastime is gardening of any type.
8. *Tell us something about you or your family that may surprise us.* Most people would not know that I had been a bartender in the past.

Barb de Souza Honored

For many years our church has sponsored the work of the Rev. Barb de Souza in Brazil. For decades she has worked in some of the poorest areas of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro as a healthcare missionary. Much of her ministry has involved the empowerment of women through a healthcare training program that has become a model emulated by other organizations in Brazil. After trying retirement here in River Falls for a few years, and with the death of her dear husband Gus, last year Barb returned to Rio and continues her work there including a new project just outside Rio. Barb recently was awarded the title of Honorary 'Citizen of The City of Rio de Janeiro' by the mayor recognizing both the quality and length of her work. Congratulations Barb! May God continue to bless you with strength, wisdom, faith and good work to do!

What the Pastor is Reading

Walking with Sam by Andrew McCarthy

Remember the 80's Brat Pack actor Andrew McCarthy from St Elmo's Fire and Pretty in Pink? He is now 60 years old (ugh) and wrote this book after walking with his 19year old son Sam on the Camino de Santiago. The Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James) is an ancient pilgrimage route that has seen recent interest. The book details what they have learned about themselves and each other on their 500 mile walk together. This is most definitely not a religious book but more a search for meaning and

Dear First Congregational, Thank you so very much for the scholarship and helping me be able to continue my education. And with that being able to continue and thrive in a place I love. So very beyond grateful.
Sincerely, Aeva Noreen

Dear First Congregational, Thank you for the amazing scholarship! I am so glad to have grown up in such a loving and giving church community! This scholarship will help me so much in paying for college! I'm going to miss this church while I'm gone at college, but the community I have to come back to means so much!!
Thank you, Ella Shepherd

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: **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. ***An interest meeting will be held in the early fall.***

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. ***Please sign up by August 1.***

Current Capital Campaign

Total Pledged	$596,646.00
Total Received to Date	414,909.41
Remaining Balance	$181,736.59

Mortgage Summary—As of July 15, 2023

Original Cost of Facilities Expansion Project	$2,386,970.00
Remaining Amount on Bank Loan	$110,246.40
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 the audio visual capabilities in the church building. Thanks to your generosity and faithful, upfront giving for the current Capital Campaign, we were able to make a $75,000 payment on the principal last month. Thank you!

Treasurer's Report

	Week of July 9, 2023	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	$ 6,568	$ 275,993
General Fund Operational Needs	$ 10,268	$ 287,504

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
Education: Stacy Myers—stacy@firstchurchrf.org
Mission: Deb Meyer—deb@firstchurchrf.org
Office: Missy Luedtke—missy@firstchurchrf.org
Youth: Alex and Sarah Plum—rfyouthgroup@gmail.com
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

SERVE generously

Simpson Shelter Needs

Urgent supply needs for June:

- Women's bras—all sizes
- Men's boxers—all sizes
- Men's T-shirts—all sizes
- Flip flops/shower shoes
- Travel size sunscreen
- Travel size bug spray

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., July 18 at 1:00 pm at Muddy Waters in Prescott.** 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.

Men's Group

The church Men's Group meets every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am for coffee, treats and conversation during the program year. Right now, we are on summer vacation until September!

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.

Thank You!

A HUGE thank you to Tim Bylander who oversaw the work on repairing our church roof after the September hailstorm. The work is finally completed and we now have a brand new roof on the whole church building. The solar panels are back up and generating. This has been a large, complex project complete with lots of unexpected twists and turns getting it completed. Hope we are good for the next few decades! Thank you Tim!

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 and the Facebook page. Among Friends is located at the church and is held on **Tuesdays from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.**

First Congregational Church, UCC
River Falls

Office Phone: 715-425-2052
E-mail: office@firstchurchrf.org
Website: 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

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
110 N. Third Street
River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
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RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

JULY 15, 2023

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

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.

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.