

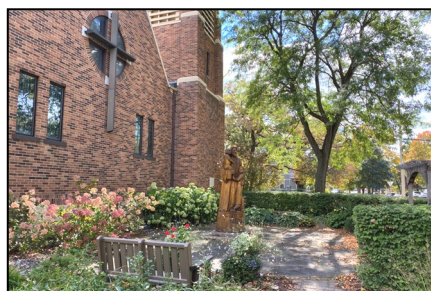
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

August 1, 2025

*No matter who you are,
no matter where you are
on your spiritual journey,
you are welcome here!*



Pastor's Page

On Sunday, July 20th, we had a guest musician, Dennis Alfveby, in worship. You may recognize the name as he has often accompanied musical groups at River Falls High School. In worship, one of the pieces he played was the familiar hymn God of Grace and God of Glory. As he was playing this past week, I was struck by the words of that hymn. I have always loved the refrain—*grant us wisdom, grant us courage*, but this week I was struck by the almost prayer like petitions buried in the hymn: *cure your children's warring madness, bend our mind to your control*, and *shame our wanton selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul*. These words seem oddly appropriate for our day and age.

When you think about it, there is something wonderful about singing together. Sometimes it is easier to sing our faith and say our faith out

loud. And singing with others, well for someone like me who tends to sing out of tune, when we get a large group together, as we had this past summer Sunday, and when the organ is going full tilt, it is easy to belt out familiar tune like Ethel Merman (google it young people).

God is present and active in our world and lives. In worship, we are reminded of this, plus given a front row seat as we seek to see the concrete ways God is leading and guiding us through a complex and turbulent world. And if you want to hear Dennis play the hymn yourself, check out the livestream at 1:04 on Sunday, July 20th, it was the final hymn. Perhaps clip the words below from this newsletter and use them as your prayer this week.

Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the facing of this hour, O God.
Amen.

*God of grace and God of glory, on
your people pour your power;*

*Crown your ancient church's story;
bring its bud to glorious flower.*

*Grant us wisdom, grant us
courage, for the facing of this hour.*

*Lo, the hosts of evil round us,
scorn your Christ, assail your ways;*

*Fears and doubts too long have
bound us; free our hearts to work
and praise.*

*Grant us wisdom, grant us
courage, for the living of these
days.*

*Cure your children's warring
madness, bend our pride to your
control;*

*Shame our wanton selfish gladness,
rich in goods and poor in soul.*

*Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.*

*Save us from weak resignation,
from the evils we deplore;*

*Let the gift of your salvation be our
glory ever more.*

*Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
that we fail not them nor thee.*

Upcoming Events

Sunday, August 10
Summer Choir! Practice begins
at 8:30 am

Mon–Thurs, August 18–21
Youth Musical: Malice in the
Palace

Thursday, August 21
Musical Performance and Dinner
at 6:00 pm — reserve for meal!

Sunday, August 24
Cedar Valley Brass in Worship

Sunday, August 31
Last 9:30 am Summer Worship
Service

Sunday, September 7
Rally Day, return to regular
10:00 am Worship and Sunday
School

Sunday, September 14
Spring Break Mission Trip
Meeting after Worship

Fall Confirmation Orientation

The 2025 Confirmation Orientation Meeting for Middle School students will be after worship on Rally Day, September 7. This meeting is **required** for all confirmands in grades 6 – 8 and their parents.

The 2025 Confirmation and Church Intern Orientation Meeting for High School students will be after worship on Sunday, September 14. This meeting is **required** for 9th graders and High School students who will participate in the Church Intern program and their parents.

Summer 2025 Children's Musical

Malice in the Palace: The Story of Esther

Dates: August 18–21, 2025

Participants: Kindergarten through Completed Grade 6

Director: Emma Cruciani

Pianist: Marsha Pearson

Night of Dinner/Theater

You are invited to a night of dinner and a show on **Thurs, August 21**. Dinner will be served starting at **6:00 pm**, followed by the main feature: the musical *Malice in the Palace: The Story of Esther*. The show has wonderful music and clever lines. Please come to support the young people in the congregation. Sign up at church or online.

Sunday School Teachers Needed

Sunday School begins again on **Rally Day, September 7**. Please volunteer to teach. All classes have teaching partners so no one teaches every week. This is an important ministry and we need volunteers. Please sign up on the sign-up sheet or online. There will be a meeting for Sunday School teachers on **Thurs, September 4, 6:30–7:30 pm**.



Tools for School

Once again, we are 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). The School Supply Event will be **August 18 and 19** here at church. Typically we serve about 300 students. Thank you for your generous support of this needed local ministry. Please bring donations to the church. Please also sign up to help sort and distribute items.

River Falls Days Bluegrass Concert Thanks

What a great way to kick off River Falls Days! Thanks to the Music Committee who again sponsored this annual event out on the front lawn and to the Rollin' River Food Truck. We had great weather, wonderful company and the return of Colin Cosgrove and his Slapdash Bluegrass band. We are already looking forward to next year! Here are some pictures of the night.





Softball News and Game Schedule

It was a perfect night to play softball. There was a breeze to keep the bugs away, and it wasn't too hot. We played the newest team in the league, Spirit of Grace. It's great to see continual interest in the church division. Our present record is 4 wins, 2 losses and one rain out. Looking ahead, our next games are:

August 4 at 6:00 pm vs First Covenant at Hoffman Park field #1

August 11 at 7:15 pm vs The River at Hoffman Park field #1

Thanks to our faithful fans who cheer us on. Come join in the fun whether you are playing or cheering the team on. If you have questions, please contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman234b@gmail.com.



Spring Break 2026

Spread the word! Save the date! We have 20 spots for a Spring Break Mission Trip to UCC related Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi for **Spring Break of 2026: March 14-21**. Any youth age 14 and older and any adult who wants to spend a week working on rehabbing houses in sunny Biloxi is welcome to join. Note Hudson Spring Break is the week before but UWRF and many UW Schools are off when we are – we would love to have college students participate! There will be a meeting on **Sunday, September 14 after worship in the Youth Room** to talk about the trip and begin sign ups. We expect this trip to fill quickly so make sure you are at the meeting! Alex Plum can provide details.



Day Trip for Middle & High School Youth: Join Alex in the church van on **Wed, Aug 6** for a day in the cities. We will explore parks, new food, visit some mission of the church and have a great day together. Contact Alex to sign up.

Youth & Young Adult Bible Study: Alex has been leading a weekly high school & young adult Bible Study over the summer. They meet at local coffee shops, generally on Tues or Wed.

They flip between morning & evening. Want to connect? Call or text him for the next gatherings 612-224-5894

Peach Fundraiser: Heads up! Peaches are expected to be delivered the first week of August. We would love to have any Middle School, High School, and College youth to help unload and sort.

Simpson Meal Thanks

Thanks to all who cooked, served and cleaned up from the meal recently served at the Simpson Homeless Shelter in Minneapolis. Thanks to chief organizer Carole Mottaz, our crew cooked and served a picnic style meal with burgers and hotdogs, an assortment of homemade salads, watermelon, cookies and more which was appreciated by the 44 men and 22 women at Simpson Shelter. Our team was given a tour of the shelter and was informed that the new building will be opening on December 15. Special thanks to Kris Andes who provided music with her harp. Please pray for the men, women, volunteers and staff of the Simpson Shelter trying to get lives back on track. This congregation has a long history with Simpson going back to Pastor Del Permann's time. Many members have served as overnight hosts and volunteers. Here are some pictures.



What The Pastor is Reading

The Ministry of Time by Kaliane Bradley—Ever wished you could travel in time? Ever wondered what those who have lived before us would think of our world today? This book is part sci-fi, part romance, part historical fiction and all engaging. I have thirty pages left but it is a great summer read. Engaging and just thought provoking enough to keep you hooked.



Church Angels

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." Hebrews 13:2

So much of the work of the church goes on almost invisibly. We all know of those who teach and sing and usher and welcome and serve, but there are also angels among us who do things behind the scenes that few know about. Taking our cue from the scripture verse above, we will try to draw attention to some of these unsung angels among us.

By my count we have had 6 funerals in the past 6 weeks. Some years we only have two or three so this is a lot. It actually takes a lot of volunteers and staff for a funeral. Missy runs the bulletin, Marsha plays the music, Dave or Jamie sings, Jeff runs the video stream, Marshall helps as a deacon, pastor leads the service, plus there is the meal. Before each funeral two families, Judy and Gary Grimm and Dianne and Al Barnes lovingly set the tables so grieving families can have time to laugh, cry and tell stories together over a wonderful meal. This is aided by Diane Welsh, Pat Anderson and Marlys Peterson who help run the kitchen and dining room. This is a huge gift to families and almost no other churches are still able to pull this off. When you see them, thank them. And consider volunteering the next time you get an email telling of the death in the church family. Whether you volunteer your time or provide baked goods, you are a church angel. Bless you all.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study

The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study for adults will resume on **September 10**. The focus will be the Gospel of John. Copies of the discussion book are available for \$20.00 in the church office. Prior to the first meeting, please read the book's introduction. You could also read the whole of John's gospel from beginning to end over the summer. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

Thrivent Free Money

Do you have a retirement account through Thrivent? If so, you can designate some or all of your 'choice dollars' to a non-profit such as First Congregational. We are now set up to receive such gifts. Talk to the church office if you need more information.

Summer Choir

Summer Choir is low commitment and low stress. We simply meet an hour before the service and sing a familiar song. The last date is **August 10**. Please consider joining us!

Treasurer's Report

	Week of July 20, 2025	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	\$ 8,755	\$ 307,406
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 308,067

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
Office: Missy Luedtke—missy@firstchurchrf.org
Youth: Alex 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

Supply needs—Great Buys:

- Men's T-shirts—sizes M, XL, XXL, XXXL
- Bras—all Sizes
- Personal size body lotion
- Personal size baby oil
- Nail care kits
- Men's & women's shower shoes
- Textured/natural hair products
- Personal size hair conditioner
- Personal size toothpaste
- Umbrellas
- Good buys on out of season clothing

All items MUST BE NEW.

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

Empty Pill Bottles (Prescription Only)

The River Falls Lions Club is collecting **empty pill bottles, only the clear prescription bottles that are filled by our pharmacists**, 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 tub is in the gathering area. If you have questions, contact Carole Mottaz.

River Falls Food Pantry

The pantry is currently in need of: **toilet paper, peanut butter, cereal and cooking oil.** Information about donations is on their website at <https://rfcfp.org/>. Donations can be brought to 705 St. Croix Street during their hours of operation:

Mondays 10:00 am—12:00 pm
and 6:00—7:30 pm
Wednesdays 1:00—5:00 pm
Thursdays 6:00—7:30 pm
Fridays 10:00 am—12:00 pm



Let's Knit/Craft Together

Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am.** We meet at **The Sycamore** on the first Thursday of each month and in the **Fellowship Hall at church** the other Thursdays. We have a great time sharing our current projects and enjoying each other's company. Any questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or firstroe@gmail.com

Women's Group

Interested in fellowship and community with other women? You are invited to join the group at noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month. Please bring a lunch. The next meetings will be **Aug 12 & 26.**

Church Yoga

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

Merry Widows

They will meet on **Wednesday, August 20 at 1:00 pm at Culvers.** All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

Men's Group

Our church men's group has decided to continue meeting this summer **every other Tuesday** (usually we take some time off over the summer). All guys are welcome to join us at **9:00 am in the Youth Room.** Our next gatherings are **Aug 12 & 26.** Join us!



Veterans Coffee Chat

Held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:30 am at The Sycamore in River Falls. Coffee and pastries are provided. Contact Megan at The Sycamore 715-997-3441 with questions.



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 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 and Thursdays from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.**



FIRST
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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
Missy Luedtke, Office Administrator
Marie Roe, Moderator
Alex Plum, Youth Minister
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
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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

110 N. Third Street
River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

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RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

AUGUST 1, 2025

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.