

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

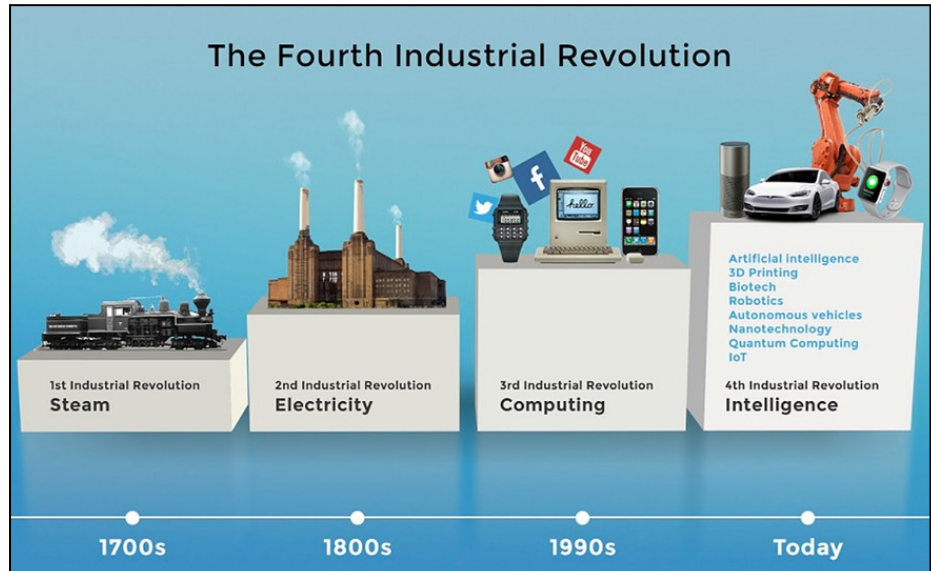
September 1, 2025

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

Pastor's Page

You and I are living in the middle of a revolution, actually in the middle of the fourth of many revolutions. Let me explain. In the First Industrial Revolution, back in the 1700's the steam engine changed how our world works, starting in England and spreading across the globe. With the Second Industrial Revolution, electricity literally lit up a new world. Then again in our lifetimes, in the 1990's the Third Industrial Revolution, the computer changed what we can do and how fast we can do it. And now with artificial intelligence, biotechnology, autonomous vehicles, we are beginning a Fourth Revolution which will again change our lives and our world. If anything the changes seem to be accelerating. So how does that make you feel? Excited? Scared? Uncertain? A mix of all of those? Me too. So how do we live faithfully in an age of deep, profound change?

One of the refrains I often hear from folks both inside and outside the church is how unbalanced the world seems right now. Old norms and standards seem to go by the wayside almost daily. It is hard, almost impossible to keep up.



How do we know what to hang on to and what to let go of? How do we stay balanced in an unbalanced world?



Take a look at the picture above. What do you see? It's kind of cool, right? Do you notice it is not symmetrical? Yet it is still balanced.

The Christian faith has a long history in a changing world. It has faith practices and wisdom to teach us how to manage the change and stress we are feeling. Join us this fall as we begin a four week worship series called ReBalancing on how we can rebalance our lives

in an unbalanced world. God does not call us to retreat from the world or to hide from its problems, but to engage it. Romans 12: 2 puts it this way: *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* Join us for each of the four Sundays in September as we learn to rebalance.

Pastor Chris

Rally Day! Sunday, September 7

Join us for the first day of the program season! Here is our schedule for the day:

- 9:00 am—Choir Practice
- 9:00 am—Bible Study
- 10:00 am—Worship and Sunday School
- 11:00 am—Coffee Fellowship
- 11:00 am—Confirmation Orientation for Middle Schoolers/Parents



Sunday School, Sunday Morning Bible Study, choir and bells resume, resume on Rally Day, **September 7.**

All children who are three years old (and toilet trained) are welcome in Sunday School.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study

The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study resumes on **September 10.** The group will study the Gospel of John. This will be an in-depth yet accessible study 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.

Sunday Morning Bible Study

Sunday morning Bible study group resumes on **September 7.** The group discusses the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets **9:00–9:50 Sunday mornings** in the Youth Room. Please join us! For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

VBS Glass Creations Ready

The fused glass art projects from VBS are ready for pick up in the church office. They are beautiful!

Sunday School Teachers Needed

Sunday School begins again on Rally Day, September 7. We still need additional teachers to be ready for Rally Day. Please sign up on the sign-up sheet or online.

There will be a meeting for Sunday School teachers on **Thursday, September 4, 6:30–7:30 pm.** For more information, please contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday School Workers Needed

Wednesday School begins on **October 1.** We need volunteers to provide snacks on a rotating basis. Please sign the list on the sign-up table or volunteer on the website.

Summer Musical Report

We had 21 elementary students participate in the summer musical, *Malice in the Palace*. It was a terrific week.

Special thanks to Emma Cruciani for directing, Marsha Pearson for accompanying, Christina Krueger for working with the students, and to Sagan Linaberry for organizing snacks.



Fall Confirmation Orientation: Required Meetings

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.

Wednesday School

All children who will be in kindergarten through Grade 5 in the fall of 2025, are invited to participate in Wednesday School. Elementary students in River Falls are picked up at the four elementary schools in town at the end of the school day. Wednesday School concludes at 5:15. Registration and permission forms are available on the church website and in the church office. It is important to have advance registration in order to be adequately prepared for students, particularly due to transportation needs.

Wednesday School begins **October 1**. Please contact Pastor Stacy with questions.



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 UWRP 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.

Coming Soon: Art Exhibit

The exhibit *Cardboard Chronicles* will be displayed in the Fellowship Hall from October 1 to November 13. The exhibit will feature 25 original paintings by Rudolph Bostic that depict biblical stories painted on cardboard with enamel and house paint.

Artist Rudolph Bostic is a longtime member of the Second African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia. Bostic found inspiration in the works of masters such as Rembrandt, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo. His art has appeared in folk art museums and galleries, particularly in the southern United States. Bostic paints as a reflection of his own spirituality. He wrote, “I try to express my love for God and the world.”

THANK YOU!
THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Thank you so for the generous church scholarship! It means so much to me for all the support my church family has given throughout the years and continuing on. This scholarship will help me continue my education as I just finished my summer classes. Thank you so much! - Emma Cernohous

Thank you so incredibly much for your contribution to my continued education as a counselor. It is truly an honor to be supported in my aspirations. I look forward to sharing my education and pouring back into the community as it has to me. Thank you again for this wonderful gift, continued support, and prayers as I move forward. - Madeline Pietz

Tools for School Thanks

Way to go church! 434 River Falls students came through this year's Tools for School Event hosted by our church. This represents a little over 12% of all River Falls School District students. Our church was organized chaos for about 3 hours on Monday, August 18th and then again for two hours the next day. A huge thanks to all the volunteers, both inside and outside the church walls who make this mission to the community possible as well as all who donated to fund it. Special thanks to Keith and Julie Larson who paid for the food, Kim Masanz and her family who direct it all, and our custodial crew who went into overtime keeping up with our regular activities plus setting up and cleaning up after the event.



Partnering for Our Sustainable Future:

A Community Conversation Hosted by Hope for Earth

Thursday, September 18, 6:30-8:30 pm at River Falls High School

Curious about how we can make our community a stronger, more sustainable, and more connected place to live? Come join your neighbors for an evening of meaningful conversation, creative ideas, and community-building. Hope for Earth is launching the Climate Action and Resiliency Initiative, and we want your voice at the table! Together, we'll explore practical ways to improve everyday life, like making energy more affordable, reducing waste, strengthening local food systems, and creating inviting green spaces. You'll learn about different focus areas of the initiative, share your thoughts, and (if you're interested) sign up to be part of an action team helping to shape the future of our community. No experience needed, just your ideas and energy. Light refreshments provided. Free and open to all. RSVP at <https://www.hopeforearth.org/>

Knitting Group Update

Please bring any hats, scarves or mittens to the green bin in the gathering area by Thursday, September 18th. We will organize the items and arrange for them to be picked up by the Basics for Local Kids organization.

We are thrilled to have so many people join us on Thursday mornings! The fellowship is wonderful and sometimes we work on the craft that we brought along. Feel free to drop in and see what we are up to!



Softball News

This will be the last softball update of the summer. The team ended the season with a record 6 wins and 4 losses, a three-way tie with two other teams in the league standings. We ended our season with 6 of the 8 teams having a fun night. We began with a picnic with brats and hot dogs grilled by Andy Krueger and the rest of the food was provided by the different teams. It was fun watching the teams share conversation with each other as they enjoyed their meal prior the game. The last game was St. Bridget and Luther Memorial “Green Team” against the remaining



4 teams, “Foursome.” Many of the teams only had partial teams at the picnic so we only had enough players for two teams. It worked out great because some players wanted to have a kickball game for all the younger kids (who watched their parents all summer) in the other field. The young kids had a blast and there was a lot of teasing at the softball game between the teams and players. There was only little bit of competitiveness as the Foursome barely beat the Green Team by 1 point. I want to express my thanks to a good church softball season! See you all next year.

Above is a picture of the some of the UCC team who you have been hearing about and supporting this summer. From left to right: Louie Filkins, Matthew Thurston back row: Bryan Jaeckel, Todd Gustafson, Josh Hudson, Tim Mills and Jared Syverson. Front row: Erin and Jen Syverson, Emily, Jamie Mills, and Deb Hoffman. Missing were Tim and Brodie Schaffer, Ben Jaeckel, Jeff Hoffman, Chris Thompson, Alex Plum, and Sam Filkins

Thank you all for an awesome year filled with laughter, encouragement, and friendship. It’s been an honor playing softball with you this summer.

Peaches 2025

What a great year for the peaches! First off, the taste of the peaches is superb! We sold 456 boxes, and our volunteers unloading the peaches and working the pickup times were super-efficient.

Despite the price increase, the youth raised over \$2000 once expenses were covered. A huge thank you to Missy in the office setting up the online order form, monitoring in-church orders, answering the phone taking orders, and answering many questions. Thank you to Diane Welsh, Marie Roe, and Marsha Phalen overseeing the pickup table and order forms. Thank you to Randy Welsh, Connor Rude, and the McGraw’s who helped carry out the peaches for the customers. Thank you also to the unloading crew who unloaded the truck and marked the boxes with peach size. The crew was Jerry and Lori Larson, Diane and Randy Welsh, Tim and Renee Bylander, Evelyn Purdy, Stacy Myers, Marsha Phalen, Connor Rude, Matthew Thurston, Lu Lueck, Falen and Brodie Luecke and Jeff and Deb Hoffman. You all were great and so faithful working through that humidity. Thank you to Chris Myers our Facebook guru. The final THANK YOU is to you, our customers; it’s your purchases of the peaches that keep this fundraiser going year and year.



Thank you again for another great Peach fundraiser. God Bless you all, Deb Hoffman

Next Learning Community: Cardboard Chronicles

Please join us for the next Learning Community event on **Tuesday, October 7, at 6:30 pm**. The focus will be a conversation about the art exhibit *Cardboard Chronicles: The Art of Rudolph Bostic* that will be displayed in the Fellowship hall starting October 1. This is the second (and final) art exhibit made possible through the grant First Congregational received from the Lilly Foundation.



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.

Have you ever had to learn a job on the fly? It is tough isn't it? For the past several years Farnum Fuller, a fourth generation church member has been our church custodian. He has a day job and a growing family of three elementary age kids, so was already busy before he started as our church custodian after Dave Mountain retired. As ministries in church have expanded and required more hours, he needed help and in stepped Troy Zakrzewski, husband of longtime church member Cheryl (Lentz). Troy has had quite a summer. If you think it is slow around here—think again. June was all funerals, plus blood drives, then VBS, then Tools for School, then the Youth Musical, plus all our regular ministries. God bless Troy for stepping in! Our new normal is that Farnum sets things up, Troy keeps them clean, and Tim Bylander, our building manager, keeps them running. Be sure to thank them all as they are our church angels for this month!

Cribbage Night

The cribbage group meets on the second Monday at the church. Players are asked to donate \$2 and the group decides which charity to donate to. Playing time starts at **7:00 pm**. All players and abilities welcome. The next game will be **September 8**.

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.



Red Cross Blood Drive

The Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church is on **Tues, Sept 30, 11:00 am-5:00 pm**. See the flyer for more info. Call 1-800-733-2767 or go to www.redcrossblood.org and enter: firstcongregationalrf to schedule an appointment.

Treasurer's Report

	Week of <u>Aug 24, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,747	\$ 356,971
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 361,182

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
Troy Zakrzewski—ztruck51ford@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: cereal, peanut butter and jelly.

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 **Sept 9 & 23**.

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, September 17 at 1:00 pm at Applebees in Hudson**. 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 meets **every other Tuesday**. We gather for conversation and fellowship around a scripture verse or story. All guys are welcome to join us at **9:00 am in the Youth Room**. Our next gatherings are **Sept 9 & 23**. 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
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

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

Troy Zakrzewski, 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

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

PERMIT #53

RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

SEPTEMBER 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.