

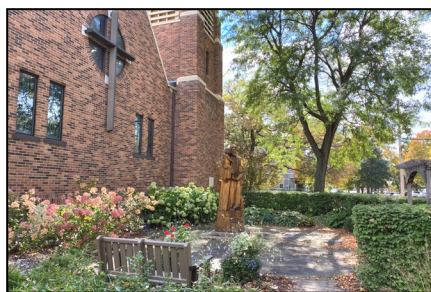
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

September 15, 2025

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



Pastor's Page

Our church is truly an intergenerational family. Our folks range in age from newborns to those nearing the 100 year mark. I am reminded of this every time I serve communion. I see the eager hands of young children communing for the first time and the hands of saints who have been around for decades. We are an intergenerational family.

Last month one of the many big mission events was Tools for School where we provided 434 River Falls school district students with school supplies. This month one of our big mission projects will be College Packs. Going off to school is a wonderfully exciting

yet anxiety producing moment for many young folks. Freedom! But also new responsibility. New relationships and experiences! But also the worry of finding new friends.

Packing College Packs has been an annual activity for our youth groups for many years now. On graduation Sunday as they get ready for the next phase of their lives, we give our high school seniors fuzzy warm blankets to remind them of God's nearness and their church home who stands with them. And once they are away—at school or the military—we send them college packs. We invite the congregation to join this ministry to our church college kids and those who visit with us from UWRF and CVTC. We ask you to provide both necessary and fun items college students may enjoy. They are mailed so think light weight! Have fun with this! We expect to pack about 30 college packs this year. And ***if you have a college student, please email the church office their mailing address.*** Thank you for remembering our church kids this way. Keep them in your prayers.

In Gratitude, PC



September Worship Series: Rebalancing

September 7—Priorities: Putting
First Things First

September 14—Stillness: Finding
Peace Amidst Busyness

September 21—Love and Truth:
Avoiding the Extremes of Life
and Faith

September 28—Growth: Growing
Without Burnout

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, September 30
Red Cross Blood Drive

Wednesday, October 1
Wednesday School and
Wednesday Family Meals Begin

Sunday, October 5
College Pack Items Deadline
Endowment Grant Request
Deadline

Tuesday, October 7
Learning Community: The Art
of Rudolph Bostick

Sunday, October 19
Music at First Church Concert

Sunday Morning Bible Study

Come and join the Sunday Morning text study group! Participants discuss the Bible passages used in worship each week. The groups meets at **9:00–9:50 Sunday mornings in the Youth Room**. Please join us! For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study

The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study is studying the Gospel of John. Come if you are eager to learn and enjoy dynamic conversations. The group meets in the library on **Wednesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

Sunday School Teacher Needed

We continue to need one more Sunday School teacher. All classes are team taught, so no one teaches every week. Please volunteer. For more information, please contact Pastor Stacy.

Bibles for 6th Graders

The congregation will present Bibles to six grade students during worship on **October 26**.

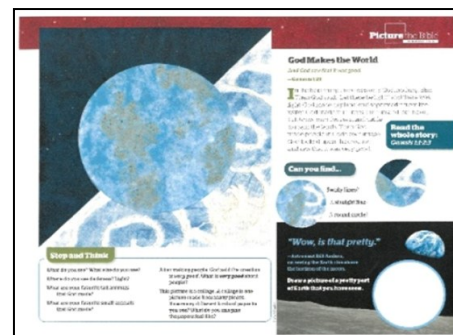
Revised Discipleship Trait Posters

Over the past months, the Christian Education Committee revised the congregation's discipleship traits and oversaw the creation of a new discipleship trait poster. The new traits were intended to be direct and easily discussed with children of all ages. The posters were introduced during VBS 2025 and will be woven into Sunday School and Wednesday School.



Sunday School Conversation Pages

Each week pre-school and elementary students will bring home a conversation page that reflects the focus of the Sunday School lesson. These pages help to connect learning at church with learning at home. Use them!



Wednesday School Workers Needed

Wednesday School begins on **October 1**. We need volunteers to provide snacks on a rotating basis and people willing to pick up children at River Falls elementary schools. Please sign the list on the sign-up table or volunteer on the website.

Wednesday School

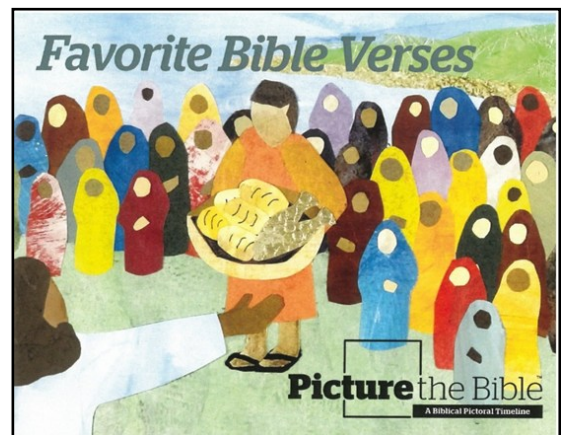
All children who are in kindergarten through Grade 5 are invited to participate in Wednesday School. Elementary students in River Falls are picked up at the four elementary schools in town at the end of the school day. Wednesday School concludes at 5:15. Registration and permission forms are available 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.

Memory Bible Verses

Elementary Sunday School are invited to participate in a Memory Bible Verse project for the current school year. Children received books on Rally Day that identify a memory verse for each month, and invite children to participate in three specific challenges for each passage:

- I can find this text in the Bible.
- I know if this text is in the Old or New Testament.
- I have memorized this Bible passage.

As they complete the challenges for each passage, students can meet with a pastor to share their accomplishment and earn a sticker for their books. While stickers are fun, what is most meaningful (hopefully!) is the chance for pastors to connect with kids.



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. Please sign up in the gathering space at church or online.

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for your generous scholarship toward my graduate program. Your kindness will aid my family in affording my degree and finding new and innovative ways to teach the youth of River Falls! Sincerely, Sarah Plum

Thank you so much for the scholarship I received to continue my education at MNSU Mankato! I am truly grateful for the support from this amazing church community. This scholarship will allow me to continue pursuing my passions and growing as a student, and it reminds me how fortunate I am to have such a supportive community behind me. I sincerely appreciate your generosity and encouragement! Thank you again for helping me reach my goals! Ella Shepherd

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."



Adam and Eve Name the Animals, Rudolph Bostic



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!





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.

Do you like to mow the lawn? Even the most avid among us get a little weary of lawn mowing at this time of the year. Each week from May through to the end of the season a small crew of folks mow our church lawn and trim the edges with a slick new lawn mower. It is relatively easy, but like so many other things in life, it takes time. This month's church angels are Ryan Luedtke, Mark and Laura Anderson, Joel Larsen and Larry Peterson who were our Summer of 2025 Lawn Angels! Thank them when you see them.



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! Sign up has begun. Please see Pastor Chris or Alex Plum for details.

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 **October 13**.

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 Sept 7, 2025	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,355	\$ 361,887
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 382,428

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

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

August 19, 2025

Treasurer's Report—Given by Louie: There were a couple of coding issues in the report that need to be corrected. July giving was down but still ahead of budget. This is typical of summer months.

New Business:

Focus for 2025—Who are we as First Congregational? - Chris

Chris' recommendation: Key Words: connection, service, inclusive, generous, learning/growing:

Love God and serve people. Everyone is welcome because everyone matters.

Marie recommended using it in the bulletin for a few weeks to test drive the response from the congregation. Chris will have some graphic design work done on it.

Tuck Pointing and Bell Tower—Louie: The cost is expensive. There is a small amount in a fund to start saving towards the cost. Some of the sheet metal needs to be replaced. Tim has requested 2 bids—1 bid is back so far on the cost of the bell tower project—under review by Trustees at this time. Base bid on repairs is almost \$200,000. No issues structurally but decisions will need to be made regarding the creation of a fund. Information will be ready for presentation and discussion at the annual meeting.

Endowment Gift Next Steps—A gift from Jan Hansen estate of \$250,000. Currently invested in a CD. Intention of the family was to have the funds help the church in some manner. Decisions need to be made regarding how the funds should be used.

New Committee Members: Christian Ed, Mission Ed still need committee members.

Old Business:

Minister for Community Update—Marie—no update at this time.

Team: Marie R, Chris M, Alan T, Stacy M, Karen L, Intern, Sally S, Deb H, Jen S

Endowment Loan Study Group—Marie and Louie—group on hold due to Jan Hansen endowment gift. They meet again on September 16th to discuss what the available options are. There is \$82,000 left in the Capital Campaign account to determine use. Current investments are doing well.

Church Insurance Update of Coverage and Deductibles—Louie and Chris—handout provided. Current coverage is through the company: Insurance Board. Premium is lower. Deductibles are changed. Grateful to have insurance coverage at all.

Ministry:

Christian Education (Angie) - VBS—38 students. Good week. New discipleship poster introduced, mud kitchen and bubbles big hit. Musical this week—21 kids. Rally Day Sept 7th, booklet made for college packs. Learning community scheduled. Andy M. is scheduled to provide a presentation.

Deacons (Karen) - Annual dinner last night. Obtained help with bread making.

Discipleship (Chris) - No meeting

Endowment Grant (Norma) - 1 application for \$3000.00 to clean the hand bells. \$9000.00 balance left. Next meeting is scheduled for October 12th. Deadline is October 5th.

Mission Education (Sally) - Operation Help provided a presentation on their services. Funds given to Falcon Links program for a meal. Sept. mission moment will be about Tools for Schools.

Music (Deb H) - July pre RF days—Slapdash Bluegrass went well. Guest organist, Dennis, went well. Cedar Valley Brass Quintet scheduled for August 24th, Lillian Tan is organizing a piano and violin concert after church service on October 19th.

Personnel (Alan in late fall) - No report

Trustees (Louie) - CO detector placed in boiler room, painted the fireplace room, sheet metal temporarily repaired,

Welcoming Ministry (Susan) - No report

Pastor (Chris) - Gearing up for fall: choir, bells, confirmation, youth group and interns, BUSY summer around the church:

Thank God for Tim, Troy and Farnum. 8 funerals in 9 weeks during the month of June. Sabbatical plans on hold at this time due to staffing level, August 18-21: Youth Musical—dinner and performance on Aug. 21st, Sept. 7th—Rally Day, Sept. 9-10 is FMSC at Tattersall, Sept 16th: All Church meeting night with new committee members. Hope for Earth—through Laura Anderson requested providing a canning and processing night in the church kitchen—approved by Council. Tools for School helped 434 kids which is 12% of RF students. 30% of the funds comes from this Congregation.

Moderator (Marie) - Expressed thanks to Council Members leaving the Council.

Norma has graciously agreed to take minutes during the September 16th Council Meeting.

Respectfully submitted, Jo Anne Friedell, Church Clerk

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://rfcfdp.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 23 & Oct 14**.

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 23 & Oct 7**. 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 15, 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.