

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

November 1, 2025

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



Pastor's Page

How many of you went to Sunday School at some point in your life? A lot of us. Next question—how much of what you learned in Sunday School has stayed with you? As a pastor whose job involves communication and teaching, it is a little humbling for me to answer—I do not remember much from Sunday School. I remember the relationships I formed. I remember helping out for church activities, clean ups, serving dinners, youth group. I remember having a substitute teacher and the kids just ran wild over her—them not me. But in all my years of Sunday school, I think I really remember only one Sunday School lesson.

It was the Sunday before Thanksgiving and our church had a huge thanksgiving meal, much like we do here. Our Sunday School teacher Mrs. Riedell brought in a big pitcher that was

partially filled with red Kool-Aid. She told us that we could have the Kool-Aid during our snack time, but before that she asked us to look at the pitcher. What do you see? Is this pitcher half empty or half full?

“Well,” said a girl in the class, “it is half empty. Everyone can see that.” It was Jennie Chilton and she was always a little negative.

Another one of my classmates, Kenny Mayer, the smartest kid in the school, challenged this. “No, it is half full, everyone can see that!”

Back and forth the debate went. Finally, the teacher chimed in—“You are both right. Both of those descriptions are accurate. But it makes all the difference in the world whether you focus on what is there and are grateful for it or whether you focus on what is not there and are depressed by it.” That Sunday School lesson happened over 50 years ago, but here I am reminding us that the choices we make in the face of ambiguous situations, the choice to be grateful or resentful, is incredibly important. I’ve lived a long time since that Sunday School teacher taught me that lesson, but this basic truth about gratitude is usually confirmed.

One day when Jesus was faced with 5000 hungry people on a hillside in an out of the way place, the crowds got restless and the disciples got nervous so they said, “Jesus send them away. We do not have enough food to feed all them, so send them away.” But

Jesus didn’t. Instead, he asked: “How much food do we have?” “Well, there is a kid here with 5 loaves and two fish.” And do you remember what happened? Did every one eat that day, yes or no? In fact were there left overs. Gratitude is the secret ingredient not just to get through a bad day or week, gratitude is the secret to faithful living.

*From October 12 Sermon Preached
by Pastor Chris on Gratitude*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, November 2
All Saints Sunday

Sunday, November 9
New Members Received
Conference Minister Rev. Franz
Rigert Preaches

Sunday, November 16
Giving Thanks Meal and
Dedication Sunday

Tuesday, November 25
Learning Community

Wed, December 3, 10 & 17
Evening Prayer Worship in
the Sanctuary at 6:30 Each
Wednesday During Advent

Sunday, December 7
Advent Workshop for Families
at 11:00 am in the Fellowship Hall

Sunday, December 21
Children’s Advent Musical

Wednesday, December 24
Christmas Eve Worship
at 4:00 and 10:00 pm

New Members Received – Sunday, November 16

New members will be received on **Sunday, November 16** at the 10:00 am worship service. If you wish to join, please make sure the church office has your information by Sunday, November 9. Please see Missy in the office or Pastor Chris for more information.



Annual Christmas Luncheon

You are invited to attend a Christmas Luncheon on **Tuesday, December 9, at 12:00 noon**. The menu features Norwegian meatballs and a large collection of Christmas cookies. Please come! The cost is \$10.00 per person. Please make a reservation by signing the list on the sign-up table, registering online, or calling the church office.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study

The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study group is making its way through the Gospel of John. The group meets in the library on **Wednesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

Volunteers Needed for the Christmas Luncheon

Please volunteer to help with the Christmas luncheon. We need cooks, kitchen workers, and cookie bakers. Please indicate your willingness to help by signing the lists on the sign-up table in the gathering space.

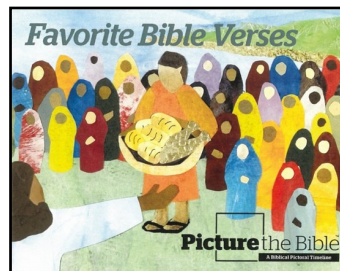
Sunday Morning Bible Study

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



The Advent Workshop

The 2025 Advent Workshop for families will be in the Fellowship Hall following Sunday School on **December 7**, the Second Sunday in Advent. The event includes making a variety of Christmas ornaments. If you have friends or neighbors considering participation in a church family, invite them to join you! Please sign up.



Children's Advent Musical

Sunday School children in pre-school through grade 5 will begin rehearsing the 2025 Advent Musical on November 9 during Sunday School. The dress rehearsal will be on Saturday, December 20, 10:00–12:00 noon. The musical will be presented during worship on Sunday, December 21. It is important for all children to regularly attend Sunday School and be present for these rehearsals.

Memory Bible Verses

October's memory verse for elementary students is Psalm 118:24 – "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

What are fitting and joyful ways to spend a day God has given you?



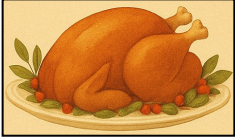
Christmas Shoebox

The drive for donations for Christmas Shoebox items for the gentlemen at the Kinnic Falls Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services in River Falls has begun. The items we collect are so very much appreciated by them. When you are out and about and see the items we have listed, grab a couple and before we know it, our list will be complete. If you would rather donate money, designate it for "Christmas Shoebox" and we will make sure all items are purchased. The list of items is on the gathering table. Blessings, Jean Smith and Marie Roe

Next Learning Community: Exploring Polarization: Nov 25, 6:30 pm

American legislatures are more polarized today than at any moment in the past half-century, and there is little end in sight. Two important questions are: Why are American legislatures so polarized? And what policies might help bridge this growing ideological gulf? In the upcoming Learning Community event, Andy Myers (congregation member and PhD candidate in Political Economics) will present his ongoing research that helps address these questions, focusing on campaign finance, local press coverage, election administration, and candidate supply.

It is possible to allow fear and impressions to dominate one's understanding of issues. This presentation will be a nonpartisan conversation focused on data-driven evidence to help people explore an important challenge of the day. Please come! Please sign up in the gathering space at church or online.



Giving Thanks Meal

Join us on **Sunday, November 16** for our annual Giving Thanks meal in the Fellowship Hall. Served after the 10am worship service at around 11am, this is your sneak peak of the Thanksgiving feast we will all enjoy later in the month with our families complete with all the fixins. Please sign up and we ask folks to bring a side dish. We expect about 250 people so sign up early! We also need folks to help clean up. Serving is done by our 6-12th graders. Come Ye Thankful People Come!

What the Pastor is Reading

Everything is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection by John Green—I know. Really? A book about Tuberculosis? How depressing. Actually the book is super interesting. This is another one of your recommendations and it is a good one. It a story about history, past and present. It is short, easy to follow, and in its own way hopeful.

Basics for Local Kids

A big thank you to everyone who has donated items. Your support keeps us going. The next few months will be busy times at BLK and volunteers are needed. You can help families shop or you can help sort, restock or organize winter wear. Shifts are usually 2 hours and new days and times are available.

To sign up for a day and time that works for you, go to <https://www.basicsforlocalkids.org/> or call Kim at 715-821-1623. Contact Renee Whipple at 715-307-5074 if you have any questions.



Wednesday Night Family Meals

On Wednesday nights, we offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is \$9 per person with a family max of \$30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:00 pm.** You can get your meal to go if you go through the line (indicate when you sign up). **Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays.** You can make a reservation online, the sign-up table or by calling the church office.

Nov 5	Boneless BBQ ribs, mac & cheese, butter & parsley potatoes, vegetable, rolls
Nov 12	Parmesan crusted chicken over rice pilaf, salad, croissant
Nov 19	Bruschetta chicken over pasta, asparagus salad, garlic toast
Nov 26	No Meal — Thanksgiving
Dec 3	Lasagna and chicken alfredo, salad, garlic toast
Dec 10	Chicken-ala-king served over biscuit with fresh fruit
Dec 17	Meatloaf, baked potato, vegetable, bread
Dec 24/31	Off for Christmas and New Years

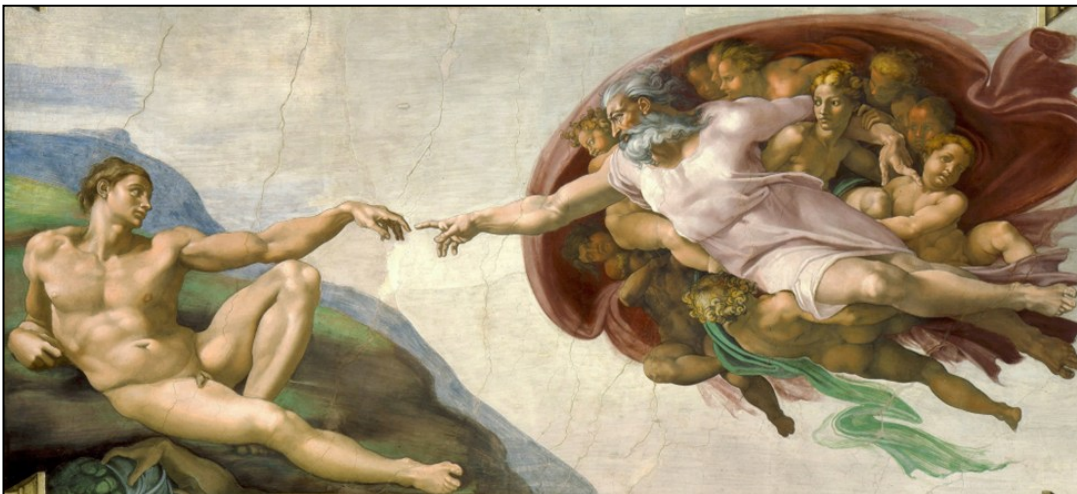
Art Exhibit

The exhibit *Cardboard Chronicles: The Biblical Art of Rudolph Bostic* is on display in the Fellowship Hall. The exhibit features 20 original paintings depicting biblical stories. Bostic's work appears in folk art museums and galleries in the United States, including in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC.

Characteristics of Bostic's work include:

- Features bright, vibrant colors
- Incorporates angels into the scenes
- Adds borders or frames (painted or additional layers of cardboard)
- Are visually complex
- Demonstrates the influence of Rembrandt, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael

Compare Bostic's *Creation of Adam* with Michelangelo's famous scene from the Sistine Chapel. What do you notice?

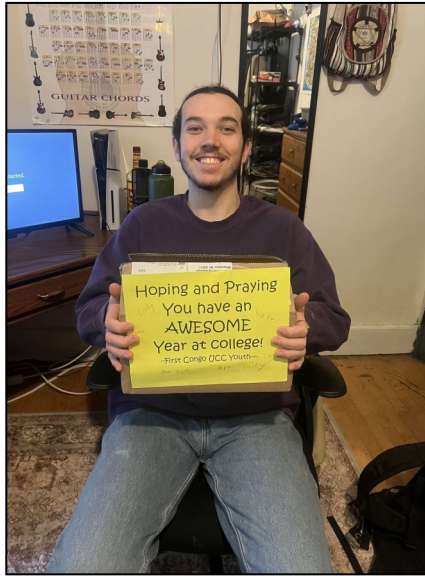
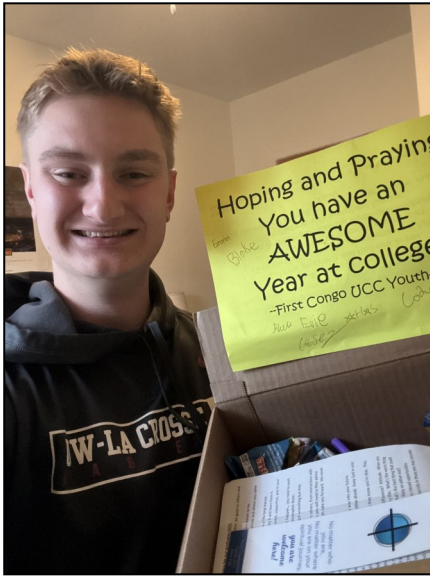


Reverse Advent Calendar Coming

Advent, which begins right after Thanksgiving, is a time of waiting and watching for the arrival of the Messiah at Christmas. Many of us use Advent Calendars at home with small gifts and chocolates as ways of counting down the days until Christmas. For the past few years our Mission Committee has also encouraged folks to join the Reverse Advent Calendar—giving instead of getting. We all know that with government cuts and shutdown, many families are struggling to put food on the table. Starting on Giving Thanks Sunday, Nov 16, our Mission Team will be handing out paper bags with the Reverse Advent Calendar attached. Each day (or week) we ask you to place items in the bag until it is full with 25 items for the Food Pantry. Bring the completed grocery bag back to church by Christmas (or earlier!). After they are dedicated, our Mission Team will bring all the items to the Food Pantry. Bless you for your generosity.

College Pack Thanks

We are receiving some nice thank you texts from our college students who are receiving their college packs. They went out early this week so if you have received yours by the end of next week, let us know. In the meantime, enjoy these pics. Favorite items? Silly String, fruit snacks and granola bars! Thank you congregation for your love of our young people.



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.

Everyone needs a vacation. Especially our church secretary Missy. On those occasions when she does leave, her desk is staffed by some of our trained office volunteers: Marie Roe, Jean Smith and Diane Welsh. They answer phones, print bulletins, work the sign-up sheets and help with our church communication. Our church is busy and keeping everyone on track when Missy is gone is a hard job but they do it with grace. Please be sure to thank this month's church angels our office volunteers Marie, Jean and Diane!

10 Years of Solar Energy

This past September we celebrated our 10th year of generating clean energy through our church solar panels. In general, those panels produce between a third and a half of the electricity we use each month. Over the past year, they have produced 23,000 kwh which is the equivalent of:

- 43,500 lbs of Co2
- 22,000 lbs of coal burned
- 3.5 homes energy use per year
- 45 barrels of oil consumed
- 900 propane cylinders used

Thank you to all who contributed to this effort!

Name Tags

We encourage you to wear your name tags so that new people and some not so new, can call you by name. It would also help the deacons when you take communion. If you do not have one, please let Missy in the church office know at missy@firstchurchrf.org. In appreciation, the Welcoming Committee.

Tax Savings and Church Blessing

If you have appreciated assets and are looking for a way both to reduce your taxes and contribute to the church mission and ministry, consider donating some of our Required Minimum Distribution to the church.

Stock Giving

Donating appreciated assets avoids federal capital gains taxes and provides a federal income tax deduction for the current market value of the gift. Similar state tax benefits are also provided in most of the country. Most importantly, you'll be making a powerful difference for your church or another charity.

IRA Giving

For church supporters age 70.5 or older, IRA gifts present a powerful way to save while you give. Generally speaking, IRA gifts are always tax-free and can help you reduce your future tax burden, satisfy a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) if you have to take one, while supporting your congregation.



Spring Break 2026

We have 2 spots left 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! We have 2 spots left for this trip but you must register and have a \$150 deposit in ASAP! Please see Alex for details. The next step is to get plane tickets so please make sure Alex has your full name and date of birth as it appears on your government issued ID and your deposit check!

Merry Widows

They will meet on **Wednesday, November 19 at 1:00 pm at Perkins in Hudson**. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

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.

WISE Corner

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group meets on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at 113 East Elm Street (Mei Mei's) & Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at Luther Memorial Church at 6:30 pm. Our church WISE Team meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Treasurer's Report

	Week of	
	Oct 19, 2025	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,976	\$ 430,739
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 446,166

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—rlyouthgroup@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:

- Women's white crew socks
- Men's white crew socks
- Men's t-shirts sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL
- Personal size shampoo
- Personal size conditioner
- Personal size body lotion
- Rain ponchos, umbrellas
- Eye masks
- Washcloths
- Padlocks
- 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 **Nov 11 & 25**.

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.

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 **Nov 4 & 18**. Join us!

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 **November 10**.



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 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
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

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PERMIT #53

RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

NOVEMBER 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.