

Weekly Word – For Sunday, December 14, 2025

Worship this Week:

This Sunday is the third Sunday of Advent and we light the candle of joy. Joy is a funny thing. You cannot buy it, create it on your own and when you search for it, you usually don't find it. Joy comes as gift. Join us this Sunday at 10:00 am as the Bell Choir provides special music, Sunday School meets (an important gathering—the last big Sunday practice before next week's program!) and communion is celebrated. Let us seek God's joy together this Advent season. Join us and invite a friend!

Link to Worship Livestream: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/rkop5ViWFX8?si=IQB0mlhqjkFELBE7>

Sunday Bulletin

This Week

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---|
| Sun., Dec 14 | 9:00-9:45 am | Bells Rehearsal in the Sanctuary |
| | 9:00-9:45 am | Sunday Morning Text Study in the Youth Room |
| | 9:45-11:15 am | Nursery Open |
| | 10:00-11:00 am | Worship Service in the Sanctuary and Livestream |
| | 10:30-11:15 am | Sunday School (Pre-School – Grade 8) |
| | 11:00-11:30 am | Coffee Fellowship in the Fellowship Hall |
| | 11:00-11:30 am | WEVR Broadcast 106.3 FM |
| Tues., Dec 16 | 9:00-10:00 am | Yoga |
| | 9:00-10:00 am | Men's Group |
| | 9:00 am-3:00 pm | Among Friends |
| | 6:30-7:30 pm | Boards and Committees Meetings |
| | 7:30-8:30 pm | Church Council Meeting |
| Wed., Dec 17 | 1:00-2:30 pm | Adult Bible Study |
| | 3:45-5:15 pm | Wednesday School |
| | 5:15-6:00 pm | Wednesday Meal (sign up!) |
| | 5:45-6:30 pm | Bells |
| | 6:30-7:00 pm | Advent Evening Prayer |
| | 7:00-7:30 pm | HS Class |
| | 7:00-7:30 pm | MS Youth Group |
| Thurs., Dec 18 | 7:00-8:00 pm | Chancel Choir |
| | 9:00-10:00 am | Yoga |
| | 9:00 am-3:00 pm | Among Friends |
| Sat., Dec 20 | 10:00-11:00 am | Knitting Group |
| | 10:00 am-Noon | Children's Advent Musical Rehearsal |
| Sun., Dec 21 | 9:00-9:45 am | Music Rehearsal in the Sanctuary |
| | 9:00-9:45 am | Sunday Morning Text Study in the Youth Room |
| | 9:45-11:15 am | Nursery Open |
| | 10:00-11:00 am | Worship Service in the Sanctuary and Livestream |
| | 10:30-11:15 am | Sunday School (Pre-School – Grade 8) |
| | 11:00-11:30 am | Coffee Fellowship in the Fellowship Hall |
| | 11:00-11:30 am | WEVR Broadcast 106.3 FM |

Assisting in Sunday's worship service are:

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| Preacher: | Chris Myers |
| Celebrant: | Stacy Johnson Myers |
| Cantor: | David Reilly |
| Liturgist: | Sue Danielson |
| Deacons: | Lance Lueck, Paul Shepherd, Brian Miller, Loral Keil, Kathy Tomlinson |
| Organist: | Marsha Pearson |

Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Rene Bylander, Deb Hoffman
Trustee: Scott Nelson
Coffee Fellowship: Beatty, Filkins & Sippel Families
Counters: Marie Roe, Scott Nelson

Altar table flowers are given by David Reilly in memory of Ruth Reilly.

Annual Reports Due: All Committees, please submit your Annual Reports, preferably electronically, by **Mon, Jan 12** to Missy Luedtke at missy@firstchurchrf.org. Annual Reports will be available to the congregation on Sun, Jan 18 for the Sun, Feb 1 Annual Meeting.

Loving God

Sunday Morning Bible Study: Please join us on Sunday mornings to discuss the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets from **9:00–9:50** in the Youth Room. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study: The group is currently studying the Gospel of John and will start a new study book early in the new year. The beginning of a new book study is a particularly good time to join. The group meets in the library on **Wednesdays, 1:00–2:30 pm**. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

2026 Financial Pledges: On Sun, Nov 16th, our Giving Thanks Sunday, we dedicated our financial pledges for 2026. If you did not return yours, please do so today. We need all of our church families and friends to make a financial commitment to support and fund the mission and ministry of the church. These pledges pay for our programs and buildings, mission and staff. Everything from Bibles and aprons for young people to VBS and confirmation, Among Friends to choir, worship and coffee fellowship and so much more. Please return your pledge in the offering plate or the church office. Thank you.

Advent Evening Prayer: Each Wednesday in Advent, we gather for worship using the Holden Evening Prayer Service of simple songs, scripture and stories. Join us on **Wed, Dec 17 at 6:30 pm** in the sanctuary for the absolutely lovely thirty-minute worship service. Youth Groups, Confirmation Classes and Interns, will all start in worship and then move to class afterward.

Advent Christmas Musical: The 2025 Advent Musical, *Miracle on Bethlehem Street*, will be presented during worship on **December 21**. Please, please come, even if you don't have children in Sunday School. Your presence in worship on December 21 will not only feed you but also support the children in our church family.

Christmas Eve Worship: This year, we will again offer our 4:00 pm Christmas Eve family worship with candlelight, communion and a story for children of all ages. The late service will be at 10:00 pm. It will again include the choir, communion and candlelight. It is beautiful, and it is not as full as the 4:00 pm family service. Please join us at either service this Christmas Eve as we again welcome the Christ child into our world and lives and consider inviting a friend to join you.

Damascus Project: Our Wisconsin Conference sponsors an online learning community called the Damascus Project with a wide variety of options to grow in faith and living. Their website is: www.the-damascus-project.org. And upcoming topics include a class on UCC History and Polity as well as Theology and Ecology. Check it out!

Loving Neighbor

Reverse Advent Calendars: “Reverse” reminds us Advent is a season of giving. Rather than getting a toy or candy each day, we will be adding a food item to the grocery bag. Each bag has a list of a suggested daily donation, but you can use your imagination and add whatever you want. When the bag is full, bring it in and leave it in the gathering area. The Mission Ed Committee will bring all the bags to the Food Pantry at the end of December. Thank you!

Sharing Families Giving Tree: The unwrapped gift with the ornament needs to be at the church **BY NOON TODAY**. Thank you for your generosity. If you have questions, please contact Diane Welsh (651-334-3128 or 715-386-6620) or the church office.

Bring Christmas Joy! Each year we invite members of the church family to deliver an amaryllis plant to one of our shut-ins or special church friends. This is a wonderful, family-friendly activity that brings joy to both the giver and recipient. Simply sign up at church, prepare the amaryllis plant, and deliver it. Feel free to add some cookies if you wish. Thank you for being part of this ministry of compassion.

The Christmas Fund: The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower income retirees. United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. There are envelopes on the gathering table or you can put a check in the offering plate with “Christmas Fund” on the memo line. Thanks again for your generosity. - Mission Education Committee

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.

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, eye masks, umbrellas, washcloths, padlocks, good buys on out-of-season clothing. All items MUST BE NEW. There is a box at the church for donations.

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.

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 Church. We are now set up to receive such gifts. Talk to the church office if you need more information.

Among Friends is a community-based social respite program serving adults who have memory loss who reside in Pierce and St. Croix Counties. For more information, contact them at (715) 293-2561. Check out the website: amongfriendsrf.com and Facebook page. It is held at the church on **Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am to 3pm**.

Among Friends Volunteers Needed: The program meets two days a week and has 12 active guests. Training is provided & the rewards are phenomenal! They are particularly in need of male volunteers but are willing to receive all. Contact them at amongfriendsrf@gmail.com

Loving Self

Longest Night Worship Service: Held at Ezekiel Lutheran Church (202 S. Second St.) on Sun, Dec 21 at 6:00 pm. A quiet, welcoming space for anyone needing calm in a chaotic season. This service is especially for those experiencing grief, loneliness, or sadness – and for all who simply need a moment to breathe and be held in God’s peace. Sponsored by churches in the River Falls area.

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, Dec 17 at 1:00 pm at West Wind in River Falls.** 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 from 9:00-10:00 am** in the Youth Room. All men are welcome to join us for coffee, donuts and lively conversation. We gather for an hour and Pastor Chris leads us into a brief discussion. Our next gatherings are **Tues, Dec 16 & Jan 6 & 20.** Join us!

Women's Group: Interested in fellowship & community with other women? You are invited to join the group at noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday. Please bring a lunch. The next meetings will be **Tues, Dec 23 & Jan 13 & 27.**

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 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

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.

WISE Corner: NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at 113 East Elm St (Mei Mei's) and the Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at First Congregational 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.

Community Life

Wednesday 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.

Dec 17 - Meatloaf, baked potato, vegetable, bread

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-59413788-wednesday>

Poinsettias for Christmas Eve: Poinsettia sales in honor or memory of someone special have begun. The order forms are on the table. The cost is \$15.00 each. Please return the order form with payment by **Dec 14.** The plants will be on display for the Christmas Eve services. You may pick your plants up after the 10pm service on Christmas Eve. Proceeds of the sales go toward youth activities.

Red Cross Blood Drive: The next blood drive held at the church is scheduled for **Fri, Jan 9, 11:00 am-5:00 pm.** Call 1-800-733-2767 or go to www.redcrossblood.org and enter: firstcongregationalrf to schedule an appointment.

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.

Youth Events

Children's Advent Musical: Sunday School children in pre-school through grade 5 are working on the Advent musical for 2025 during class. It is important for the children to have consistent attendance so they are able to learn lines and songs. Thank you!

Children's Advent Musical Dress Rehearsal: The dress rehearsal for the children's Advent Musical is Saturday, December 21. Children in grades 1-5 should arrive at 10:00 am. Children in Pre-School and Kindergarten should arrive at 11:00 am. All the children will be done at noon.

Sign Ups

Coffee Fellowship Hosts Needed: Please sign up to help host and serve. Everything you need is provided, you just need to get there a little early to get things ready, serve and do a quick clean up. Sign up at church or here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-coffee>

Liturgists Needed: Please sign up to be a Sunday liturgist. You will lead us in the Call to Worship and a Scripture text. The bulletin will be sent via email to you on Thursday. Sign up at church or here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-liturgist>

Welcomers Needed: Please sign up to be a welcomer on Sunday morning before the worship service. One person is needed at the bottom of the stairs & one person is needed at the ramp entrance. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to the service. Sign up at church or here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-welcomers>

Altar Table Flowers: Please sign up to provide flowers for the altar for Sunday worship. Sign up at church or here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-altar>

Church App: The church has a mobile phone app. You can download it from the church website or by scanning the QR Code found on a flyer on the sign-up table and Facebook.



Offering QR Code

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click the tab 'Give Online'

Finances

THANK YOU to all of you for your support of the mission and ministry of our church through your tithes, offerings, and gifts. Your generosity empowers our church! Please be sure to sign up for e-giving or mail/drop off your gifts. There is also an option to give online via our church website.

Treasurer's Report

| | <u>Dec 7, 2025</u> | <u>Year to Date</u> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| General Fund Income* | \$ 7,344 | \$ 515,344 |
| General Fund Operational Needs | \$ 10,623 | \$ 520,527 |

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

People

- For the return of our Advent Evening Prayer worship services Wednesday, December 17, may they kindle hope and joy with Advent season
- For the return of the Reverse Advent Calendar, a time to give instead of receive during Advent, may God's people be fed
- For our Bell Choir gracing us with your music this Sunday, thank you!
- For 10 years of generating clean solar energy with our church solar panels, thanks be to God!
- For our church musicians who each week bring their gifts to grace our worship service, thank you!

Do you have upcoming news or celebrations to share with the congregation? Graduations? Birthdays and Anniversary celebrations? Please email them to office@firstchurchrf.org by Wednesday of each week to be included in the Weekly Word which is sent out on Thursdays.

Prayer: Prayer connects us with God and our neighbors. Each week in the bulletin there is a prayer list of people, situations and thanksgivings that is also sent out by email to help people in their prayer life. You can sign up by contacting the office at office@firstchurchrf.org

Church Office Hours:

Monday through Thursday – 8:30 am to 4:00 pm

Friday – 8:30 am to 12:00 pm

Church Staff Contact:

Church Office - 715-425-2052

Pastor: Chris Myers - chris@firstchurchrf.org

Education: Stacy Johnson Myers - stacy@firstchurchrf.org

Youth: Alex Plum – rfyouthgroup@gmail.com

Office/Finance: Missy Luedtke - missy@firstchurchrf.org

Music: Jamie Mills - degolierjamie@gmail.com

Choir: Sarah Plum – sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com

Building: Farnum Fuller – farnumfuller@gmail.com

Building: Troy Zakrzewski – ztruck51ford@gmail.com

Maintenance: Tim Bylander - timthefixitguy@gmail.com