

Weekly Word – For Sunday, December 21, 2025

Worship this Week:

On this the fourth Sunday of Advent we light the final candle on the Advent wreath - Love. Jesus is God's love come down to earth in human form. Join us at the 10:00 am worship service as during the sermon spot our Sunday School kids present **Miracle on Bethlehem Street**, a fun and faith-filled retelling of the Christmas story from the perspective of those who work at the inn in Bethlehem. Remember to bring your Reverse Advent Calendar food this Sunday or on Christmas Eve. The food will be dedicated on Sunday, December 28th and taken to the River Falls Food Pantry on Monday December 29th at 9:00 am (helpers needed to load!). Join us and invite a friend!

Note: Christmas Eve Worship is at 4:00 pm and 10:00 pm

4:00 pm: Family service with story, candles and communion (nursery open)

10:00 pm: Late service with choir, candles and communion

Link to Worship Livestream: https://www.youtube.com/embed/i3XSxjcOz_s?si=hCDEu8_kSMvkT2AB

Sunday Bulletin

This Week

Sun., Dec 21	9:00-9:45 am	Play 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 & Livestream – Children's Advent Musical
	11:00-11:30 am	Coffee Fellowship in the Fellowship Hall
	11:00-11:30 am	WEVR Broadcast 106.3 FM
Tues., Dec 23	9:00-10:00 am	Yoga
	9:00 am-3:00 pm	Among Friends
	12:00-1:00 pm	Women's Group
Wed., Dec 24	4:00-5:00 pm	Christmas Eve Family Worship with Children's Story, Communion and Candles
	10:00-11:00 pm	Christmas Eve Worship with Choir, Communion and Candles
Thurs., Dec 25		Christmas Day – Church Office Closed
Fri., Dec 26		Church Office Closed
Sun., Dec 28	9:00-9:45 am	Music Rehearsal in the Sanctuary
		No Sunday Morning Text Study
	9:45-11:15 am	Nursery Open
	10:00-11:00 am	Worship Service in the Sanctuary and Livestream
		No Sunday School
	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:

Preacher:	Chris Myers
Celebrant:	Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor:	David Reilly
Liturgist:	Carole Mottaz
Deacons:	Laura Anderson, Liz Swank, Becky Pajac, Heidi Cavaness, Melissa Oscanyan
Organist:	Marsha Pearson
Nursery:	Kahla Fuller
Live Stream:	Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers:	Norma Revels, Lu Lueck
Trustee:	Andy Krueger
Coffee Fellowship:	Welcoming Ministry – St. B's donuts
Counters:	Diane Welsh, Mark Andeson

Altar table flowers are given by Karri Van Dell in memory of Peggy Thompson.

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. **The group will not be meeting on Dec 28 and Jan 4.** For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study: On January 7, 2026, the Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study group will begin a new study on the Book of Acts. We will read and discuss Matthew Skinner's *Acts: Catching Up with the Spirit*. Copies of the book are available in the church office for \$16.00 each. 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- Last Call: On 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 Christmas Musical: The 2025 Advent Musical, *Miracle on Bethlehem Street*, will be presented during worship on **December 21**. 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!

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.

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, 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.

Game Day Sunday: Game Day Sunday is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next Game Day is **Jan 18 with a new time of 11:45 am.** Join us!

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

Church Office Notes: Please note that during the Christmas and New Year break, the church office will have the following hours:

Mon & Tues, Dec 22 & 23	8:30 am to 4:00 pm
Wed, Dec 24	8:30 am to Noon
Thurs & Fri, Dec 25 & 26	Closed
Mon & Tues, Dec 29 & 30	8:30 am to 4:00 pm
Wed, Dec 31	8:30 am to Noon
Thurs & Fri, Jan 1 & 2	Closed

Note: Any offering or financial gifts must be either dropped off at the church or postmarked by December 31 to be included in this year's giving statement. Thank you for your generosity!

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.

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 Dress Rehearsal: The dress rehearsal is **Sat, Dec 20**. 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.

Additional Driver Needed: We need a driver willing to pick up two students from the River Falls Public Montessori School on Wednesday afternoons from January through April of 2026. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Pastor Stacy.

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 14, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 7,585	\$ 533,887
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 531,150

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

People

- For the Christmas trees gracing our Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall donated by the Noreen family, they are beautiful
- For our choir and church musicians who led Advent Evening Prayer and will grace us on Christmas Eve
- For the Reverse Advent Calendar, a time to give instead of receive during Advent, may God's people be fed
- 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