

Weekly Word – For Sunday, December 28, 2025

Worship this Week:

It is still Christmas! While the presents are opened and the guests may have gone home, the Christmas story continues. We will be dedicating the food given from the Reverse Advent Calendars. Join us at the 10:00 am Sunday worship service as Sarah Plum provides special music and communion is celebrated. The nursery is open, but Sunday School is off this week. Coffee Fellowship follows at 11:00 am in the Fellowship Hall. Merry Christmas!

Note: We could also use some help on Monday, December 29th at 9:00 am when we pack up all the food from the Reverse Advent Calendars and bring it to the Food Pantry! No sign-ups, just show up! Any ages welcome!

Link to Worship Livestream: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/DhC6Djspnas?si=Ts7ZGTAi2h8YzDTe>

Sunday Bulletin

This Week

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
Tues., Dec 30	9:00-10:00 am	Yoga No Among Friends
Wed, Dec 31		New Year's Eve – Church Office Closes at Noon
Thurs., Jan 1		New Year's Day – Church Office Closed
Fri., Jan 2		Church Office Closed
Sun., Jan 4	9:00-9:45 am	Music Rehearsal in the Sanctuary No 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 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:	Rev. Doris Ruben
Celebrant:	Rev. Doris Ruben
Cantor:	David Reilly
Liturgist:	Carol Merriman
Deacons:	Loral Keil, Brian Miller, Liz Swank, Jena Most, Becky Pajac
Organist:	Terry Mithun
Nursery:	Kahla Fuller
Live Stream:	Jeff Hoffman
Trustee:	Matt Meyer
Coffee Fellowship:	

Counters: Marie Roe, Scott Nelson

Altar table flowers are given by Deb Hulbert in memory of Abby Timmerman and the caring community of River Falls.

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.

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

Giving Tree Thank You: On behalf of the Sharing Families Giving Tree program, I would like to thank our congregation for their generosity. Because of our congregation, 10 families, including 20 children, will have a happier Christmas this year. Thank you again! From Diane and Randy Welsh.

Christmas Shoebox Thank You: Thank you everyone! The Christmas Shoebox collection for the gentlemen at the Kinnic Rehabilitation and Alcohol Treatment was once again a success. With your donations of either cash or items we were able to provide 60 boxes and bags with the essentials that you and I sometimes take for granted. These gifts we bring are very much appreciated by those present. Please take note of the beautiful, signed card that they provided. Thank you again. Marie Roe and Jean Smith

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 then at amongfriendsrf@gmail.com

Loving Self

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, Jan 21 at 1:00 pm at Table on Main in River Falls.** All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow 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, 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, 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.

Please note: The knitting group is taking a break until Thursday, January 8th when we will meet at the Sycamore. Keep working on your project or craft.

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:

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

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 21, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 8,034	\$ 538,593
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 541,773

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

People

- For those who gave the poinsettias gracing our sanctuary on Christmas Eve, they are beautiful
- 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 us through a busy Advent and Christmas, God bless you all!
- For 10 years of generating clean solar energy with our church solar panels, thanks be to God!

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