

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

April 1, 2026

Our mission is to love God and serve people.

Everyone is welcome because everyone matters.



Pastor's Page

Resurrection

It would be hard for me to find a better image for resurrection than the people of Biloxi, Mississippi. Twenty years ago, Hurricane Katrina blew in bringing with it 150+ mile an hour winds and a wall of water up to 30 feet high. In the five Gulf front counties in Mississippi, over 64,000 homes were gone and 68,000 were damaged. The damage to life and property was cataclysmic. Katrina was Good Friday for many of these people. It was a day and night of darkness and despair.

Still the death and despair of that day does not have the final word. Good Friday is followed by Easter, resurrection and new life. Today the people of the Gulf Coast continue to rebuild, move on and move forward. And part of that work of resurrection was undertaken by our 2026 Spring Break Mission Team who spent a week at UCC related Back Bay

Mission painting, ripping out floors, working at the Food Pantry and serving meals to homeless folk. What strikes me and those who undertake this trip every time is how thankful the residents of the Gulf Coast are. Everywhere you go - church, post office, supermarket, restaurants - those who come to help are thanked. Thank you to all who helped enable this year's Spring Break Mission trip to happen. (See picture to the left.)

The looooooong gospel lessons we have been hearing this Lenten season on Sundays have all been stories of resurrection and new life - Lazarus (John 11), the Healing of the Blind Man (John 9), the Samaritan Woman at the Well (John 4). They are stories of resurrection, not in the future (heaven) or perfect world, but resurrection here and now, where it is needed. And in each of these stories God in Christ does the hard, impossible work we cannot do on our own power, then God asks us

to participate in it. Think about it. On Easter Sunday after raising Jesus from the dead, the angel tells the women who came to the tomb - do not be afraid. Then the angel tells them to go tell the disciples and go to Galilee where they will find the risen Christ. Not in heaven. Not in some wonderful future life. They see the resurrected Jesus in this messy, hurting world. But they need to show up. They need to invite others. They need to participate in God's work of resurrection and make it their own.

Our world is broken and changing in ways we are still trying to discern and understand. Holy Week offers us a window and a power to help us move forward. It gives us new eyes and faith we did not know we had to participate in the resurrecting work God is doing even today. Come and be a part of it. Join us for Holy Week and Easter this year. And don't forget to invite a friend to join you!

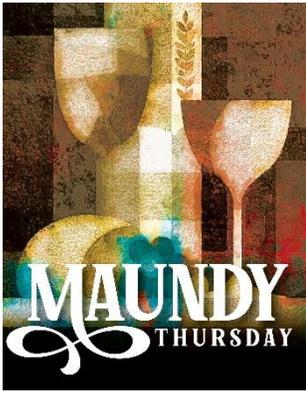
In Gratitude, Pastor Chris

**Join us for
Holy Week Worship**

Palm Sunday	Mar 29 10:00 am
Maundy Thursday	April 2 6:30 pm
Good Friday Cantata	April 3 6:30 pm
Easter Sunday	April 5 9:00 & 10:30 am
Easter Breakfast	April 5 8:00-10:15 am

All Are Welcome!

First Congregational Church
110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI



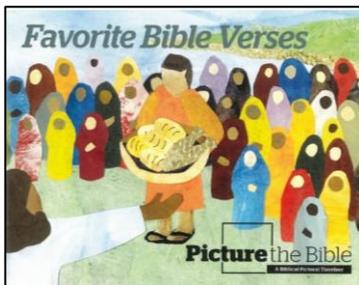
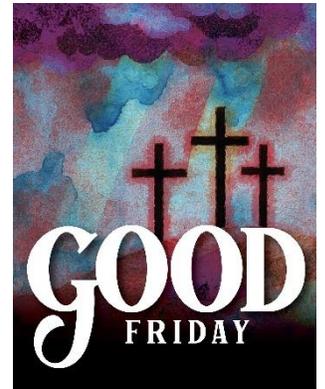
Maundy Thursday Worship

Maundy refers to the commandment (Mandatum) Jesus gives his disciples at the Last Supper. On Maundy Thursday we hear the story of how Jesus took the Passover meal celebrating the freedom of the Jews in slavery and transformed it into the sacrament of communion. We also hear the story of how he washed his disciple's feet and called them to love and serve one another. This year's Maundy Thursday worship service will be in the sanctuary and will include some beautiful music (Michael Joncas' Song of the Lord's Supper) and the communion celebration and will end in a moving Tenebrae service as scripture is read, candles are extinguished and the room grows dark in preparation for the Good Friday service the next day. It is a truly moving service. Join us.

Good Friday Cantata

Join our choir for the annual Good Friday Cantata. This year they will be singing "Come Walk with Me" which was last performed before Covid and was one of the choir's favorite pieces.

The cantata will be performed during the 6:30 pm Good Friday worship service on Friday, April 3rd. Join us.



Memory Bible Verses

April's memory verse for elementary students is John 10:10 – "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

How do you recognize abundant life?

Sunday Morning Text Study

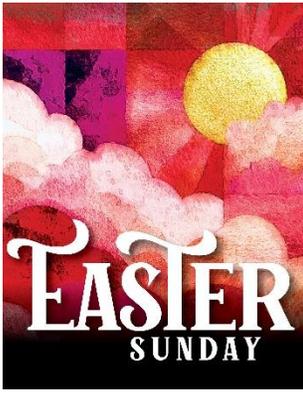
Please join us on Sunday mornings to ponder the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets at 9:00-9:50 **Sunday mornings in the Youth Room.** For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study

The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study is studying the Old Testament book of Ruth. The group meets in the Fireplace Room on **Wednesdays, 1:00-2:30 pm.** Copies of the Ruth study are in the office for no charge. If you have questions, contact Pastor Stacy.

Upcoming Events

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| Thursday, April 2 | Maundy Thursday Worship at 6:30 pm |
| Friday, April 3 | Good Friday Choir Cantata at 6:30 pm |
| Sunday, April 5 | Easter Worship at 9:00 & 10:30 am with Breakfast Served from 8:00 to 10:15 am (sign up) |
| Monday, April 6 | Easter Monday - Church Office Closed |
| Wednesday, April 8 | Last Wednesday Night Meal - Relay for Life Hot Dish Night! |
| Saturday, April 25 | Church Outdoor Spring Clean Up from 9:00-11:00 am |
| | EarthFest at UWRF from Noon to 4:00 pm (come stop at the First Congo table!) |



Easter Worship at 9:00 and 10:30 am

Join us as we loudly, lavishly and lovingly celebrate the good news of Easter: Christ is risen! Easter Worship will include organ, piano, brass, choir and bells.

Join us for the Easter Breakfast either before or after the 9:00 and 10:30 am worship services (please sign up online or at church!).

Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Join us for Easter Breakfast – Sunday, April 5

Easter Breakfast will be served from **8:00 am to 10:15 am**. The menu will be blueberry French toast, eggs benedict casserole, scrambled eggs with cheese, sausage links, bacon, mixed fresh fruit, Danishes and cinnamon rolls, coffee, apple and orange juice and milk.

Cost is \$10 per person with a family max of \$40, all of which goes to our Youth Fund for mission trips and opportunities. Please sign up by Wed, April 1 at church or online.



Relay for Life – Hot Dish Meal – Wednesday, April 8

The Relay for Life team is trying something new this year and adding a Hot Dish Night to help raise funds for the Relay for Life event. Relay for Life raises money for the American Cancer Society. The Hot Dish Meal, also known as a casserole depending on where you are from, is **Wednesday, April 8 from 5:15–6:00 pm** in the Fellowship Hall or you may take your meal to go. We will have a variety of hot dishes to taste and enjoy. The meal will also include a simple salad, dessert, and some fun side dishes. The cost of the meal is a donation to Relay for Life/American Cancer Society.

We will have luminaries “in honor of” or “in memory of” a special person for sale. The cost of the luminaries is \$5/bag. Our team is also looking for some items to sell at the silent auction. If you have any questions or would like to help with the meal, contact Deb Hoffman at debhoffman234b@gmail.com or (612)308-4945.

Fused Glass Project

The Lenten fused glass project depicting “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” continues. Children have added sky, water, and mountains to the already completed sun, area representing chaos (a time before God brought order to the world), and a rainbow. The next focus will be on stars and finishing the trees. There will be poppies to add to the meadows and fish to put in the sea.





Relay for Life – Friday, April 10

The Relay for Life Event is held on **Friday, April 10 from 5:00 to 9:30 pm at the River Falls High School** in the common area and the gym. The theme this year is “We are the World, United for a Cure.”

The event begins with the Spaghetti Dinner at 5:00 pm which continues until 8:00 pm unless they run out before. The Survivor Walk is at 6:00 pm and participants can walk the track anytime except during the Luminary Ceremony. The Silent Auction is in the gym from 5:30–8:30 pm and other fundraising sales are in the common area from 5:30-8:30 pm. The Luminary Ceremony starts around 8:30-8:45 pm.

Luminaries can be purchased at church on March 29, April 6 and April 8, or contact Deb Hoffman at (612) 308-4945. Luminaries can also be purchased at the Relay from 5:00-7:30 pm. The cost of the luminaries “in Honor of” or “in Memory of” is \$5.00. Some fun activities are scheduled for kids throughout the event. The Relay for Life’s Closing Ceremony is at 9:00 pm and the event ends at 9:30 pm.

If you have any questions or would like to join our team, contact Deb Hoffman at debhoffman234b@gmail.com or (612) 308-4945.

One Great Hour of Sharing

One Great Hour of Sharing is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ within the Wider Church Ministries. We need to support this ministry, maybe now more than ever.

Envelopes are on the sign-up table. Thank you for your generous support. - Mission Education Committee

Earth Fest 2026

Mark your calendars! Our River Falls celebration of this day will be held on **Saturday, April 25, from 12:00-4:00 pm at UW-River Falls University Center**. Last year over 2500 folks showed up for food, fellowship, workshops and so much more.

First Congregational will have a booth so stop by and see us. We are giving away Earth Balls! Check it out at www.hopeforearth.org!

Ukraine Relief

A quick but heart felt thank you to so many of you who have contributed to refugee relief for those living through the war in Ukraine. Nearly \$25,000 has been given by folks in this congregation to help. Funds have been funneled through Church World Service through their Moldova office to pay rent, provide food, medicine and schooling. Thank you church! May this madness soon end and peace come.

Spring Clean-Up Saturday, April 25 9:00 am



Please bring your gloves, rakes, blowers, pruning shears, etc. to help clean up the grounds at the church. Please sign up and join us!



Wellspring Village: Tiny Homes for Homeless in RF

The movement continues as we seek to build tiny homes to address housing insecure folks in our own community. Our church leadership team includes Carole Mottaz, Tom Oscanyan, Marshall Skule and Pastor Chris.

We received a grant from the Wisconsin Conference for \$5,000 who remarked about the interchurch and community support for this project. Stay tuned for more updates soon! The goal is to have a least one or two tiny homes open as early as this summer.



VBS and the Children's Musical

VBS (children age 3 through completed grade 5) will be July 27-30, from 9:00-11:30 am.

Children's Musical (children who have completed kindergarten through grade 6) will be August 10-13, from 9:00 am-Noon.

Registration forms are online and available at church. Please invite friends and neighbors to participate.



Red Cross Blood Drive

The next Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church is on **Wednesday, May 20, from 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.

Basics for Local Kids

A big thank you to everyone who has donated items. Your support keeps us going. 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, 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.

Name Tags

We encourage you to wear your name tags so that everyone 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.

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 St (Mei Mei's) & 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.

Treasurer's Report

	Week of Mar 22 2026	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	\$ 5,311	\$ 138,867
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 135,696

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

Scholarships Due

Please note that church scholarships are due the first Sunday of May, this year May 3rd. Three different kinds of church scholarships are available:

1. High School Seniors
2. Secondary and Graduate School
3. Spiritual Growth and Church Camp

All the details are on the church website under the connect tab (then look for forms). Forms must be in the church office by Sunday, May 3rd and will be awarded on Graduation Sunday which will be Sunday, May 31st at 9:30 am. Applicants should plan to be in worship that day to receive their award.

People in the Pews: Heather Sitz

Where did you grow up/hometown? I grew up down the road in Beldenville, WI about 15 minutes south of River Falls and graduated from Ellsworth, the cheese capital of the world!

Where do you live now? Our family just got to build a new house 2 years ago east of River Falls. I live with my husband, Dan, and our children Sawyer (5), Laney (3), and Evelyn (1) on my husband's family farm. Dan and I have been married for almost 12 years. I believe on the 2nd date he explained that he never planned to move away from his property, so if I was interested in living somewhere else "exotic" I should probably move along because he wasn't going to budge...and here we are with absolutely no regrets!



How long have you been attending First Congregational Church? I started attending regularly in the fall of 2024 when my son Sawyer was ready to start Sunday school. Otherwise, we had our two older children baptized but we didn't attend much besides major holidays.

What keeps you coming back? The UCC has really made a lasting impact on me and my family. Since the moment I stepped through the door with my "crazy crew," I have really felt accepted and welcomed with open arms. I love how it not only feels like a genuine community, but I look around and see the relationships, and it makes my heart so happy. The people are so supportive, not only in our church but also in how they show up for so many others in our town and around the area. The weekly sermons are so relatable and speak to me each week. Also, the wonderful staff in the nursery is a bonus too! This church has really allowed my faith to grow and blossom, and I feel extremely blessed to have found UCC.

What is your favorite childhood memory? Honestly the simple things... I was very fortunate to have grown up on a farm and was a country kid to the core. From running barefoot everywhere to helping with the animals and exploring the barns to riding my bike all over the country... I loved my childhood. It came with a lot of "chores" of course but with 4 kids it was never boring. Too many good memories to count and share, again I feel so blessed!

What is your favorite hobby or pastime? Nowadays, my free time looks a lot different, so when I have some time away from my tribe, I like to be outdoors and spend time with my sisters or friends, and go kayaking down the Kinni or just sit around a bonfire with music. In general, as a family, we love music, especially checking out live local bands. Maybe we'll see you around town!

Grace Place

Supply needs:

- New adult undergarments (underwear up to size XXL)
- New bras
- New or like-new sweatpants up to size 4X
- New or like-new T-shirts up to size 4X
- New shoes (adult men and female)
- Belts
- Adult socks
- Good buys

There is a bin at 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: toilet paper, cereal, peanut butter and cooking oil. 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 fristroe@gmail.com

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.

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 **April 14 & 28**.

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 **April 14 & 28**. Join us!

Merry Widows

They will meet on **Wednesday, April 15 at 1:00 pm at Mariachi Loco** in River Falls. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See Linda Morrow for more information.

Game Day Sunday

Game Day Sunday is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next Game Days are **April 19 at 11:45 am**. 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.

Among Friends

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**.



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'



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

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**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

110 N. Third Street
River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

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NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

PERMIT #53

RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

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APRIL 1, 2026

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 and 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 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.