

# FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://www.firstchurchrf.org)

May 1, 2026

**Our mission is to love God  
and serve people.**

**Everyone is welcome because  
everyone matters.**



## Pastor's Page

When you picture a homeless person, who do you see? Where are they? What do they look like? And how do you think they became homeless?

I think many people in River Falls picture someone in the Twin Cities living in one of the numerous encampments that have sprung up across the Twin Cities. Do you picture someone who works at the Cookie Factory, but lives in their car because they cannot afford an apartment? Do you picture a recently retired woman who in her divorce lost her home and now floats from friend's sofa to sofa? Do you picture a high school student? One of the saddest parts of my call as pastor are the many calls we in the church get about people looking for housing.

A little over a year ago, six churches in River Falls started researching tiny homes as a way of easing this growing problem in our community.

We looked for successful models and after reviewing several, we settled on Hope Village in Chippewa Falls which began with two churches with two tiny homes. These are not grand palaces but true tiny homes with heat, but no running water (camping toilets, jugs of water, and access to showers/flush toilets in the church building). This is not ideal, but is better than sleeping outside or in your car. What made Hope Village unique was their mentorship model. Each guest is assigned a mentor who checks in with them daily. The goal is to get the guest into stable long-term housing. Check out their website:

<https://www.hopevillagechippewafall.s.org/>

We liked the model from Hope Village because it is community and church based. They receive no federal funding and have deep roots in the community. What started out as two tiny homes in two different churches has grown to a community of twelve tiny homes, an apartment building and even twin homes. They have enlisted help from churches, and even businesses that once were wary, now hire Hope Village residents. In over ten years of existence, there have only been two police calls. One was from an outsider and the other was a teen who stole a candy bar and left footprints right to his tiny home (he apologized and made restitution). Two things that made this model so compelling are the mentoring aspect and their Good Neighbor Policy. Each resident signs a one week rent contract and meets regularly with

coaches and mentors (how to save, how to find jobs, apply for city housing, how to be a homeowner). The contract can be renewed each week if they make progress toward their stated goals. Residents must also sign and adhere to a Good Neighbor Policy. Living in community means there are some things you just cannot do (drugs, loud music, littering) and some things you may need to learn to do (help your neighbor, keep your place and surroundings tidy). It also means being willing to have weekly inspections to make sure you are living up to your promises.

Recently six River Falls churches, including ours, have started taking that model and applying it to River Falls. A board has been formed with Pastor Chris and Tom Oscanyan from our church serving as members and incorporation papers have been filed. We have been granted a \$5,000 grant from the Wisconsin Conference because of our innovative and collaborative approach. An informational session was held with over 80 people in attendance. Interestingly, one of those who came to express his strong worry about this project, is now on the board. The first tiny home is being built by one of the building classes at River Falls High School and will be located at Luther Memorial Church. The board is actively looking for volunteers to help mentor and coach future guests and clean/refresh the tiny homes between stays. This is still very much a work in progress.

*Continued on next page*

I am impressed by the energy and vision these six churches have brought to this issue. Working with the city, community partners like Our Neighbors' Place and Operation Help, I am hopeful for this project. We all know housing insecurity is a growing need in our community, and everyone wants someone to do something. Well... here we are. Will mistakes be made? Likely! But with a great model to follow, it makes our task easier. Please pray for the board as they seek to chart a way forward. Please ask questions, honest questions. We know there are lots of real fears around the issue of homelessness.

I end with a reminder of some of the teaching of our common Christian faith. Isaiah 57:1 says: *Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?* And Jesus himself in Matthew 25:35-40, explicitly states that providing shelter (*"I was a stranger and you invited me in"*) and food is service to him. Again, please pray for this new ministry as we seek ways to walk with our community members.

In Gratitude, Pastor Chris

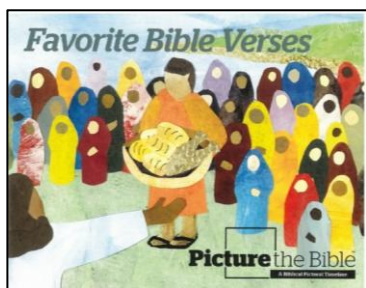
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## Last Days of the Program Year

The last day of Wednesday School for the current academic year will be April 29. Wednesday School will resume on October 7.

The last day of Sunday School and the Adult Forum for the current academic year will be May 17. Sunday School and the Adult Forum will resume on Rally Day, September 13.

The last day of Wednesday Bible Study for the current program year will be May 20. Adult Bible Study will resume on September 16 with a study of the book of Revelation.



### Memory Bible Verses

The May memory verse is Psalm 23:1-3 -

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside still waters;  
He restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

How do you know when you are on right paths? Wrong paths?

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### Sunday Morning Text Study

Please join us on Sunday mornings to discuss the Bible texts featured in that morning's worship. The group meets at **9:00-9:50 Sunday mornings in the Youth Room**. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

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### Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study

The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study meets in the Fireplace Room on **Wednesdays, 1:00-2:30 pm**. The group is reading *What Do We Mean by God?* by Keith Ward. The year will end by considering Thomas Long's *What Happens When We Die?* Copies of the books are available in the church office. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Stacy.

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### Fused Glass Project

The "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" fused glass project is nearing completion. Once it is ready it will be mounted on the wall near the front door. It will be beautiful! Watch for the unveiling to be announced.



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## Mother's Day – Father's Day Diaper Drive

It's that time of year again!! The Mission Ed Committee will once again sponsor a Diaper Drive between Mother's Day and Father's Day. Starting May 10th and running through June 21st, we will collect diapers and wipes in the gathering area. After Father's Day the diapers will be donated to Our Neighbors' Place, Turning Point and the River Falls Food Pantry.

## VBS and Summer Children's Musical

Dates for the 2026 children's summer programs are:

### VBS

Dates: July 27-30, 9:00-11:30 am

Theme: My Peace I Give to You

### Children's Musical

Dates: August 10-13, 9:00 am-Noon

Show: *Rock Slinger and His Greatest Hits*



VBS is for children age 3 to completed grade 5. The musical is for children who have completed kindergarten through completed grade 6. We will need adult and teen volunteers for VBS. Please save the dates!

Emma Cruciani, music teacher at Rocky Branch Elementary, will direct the musical.

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

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## Upcoming Events

Sat, May 2	JoAnn Lentz Memorial Gathering 11:00am-1:00pm in Fellowship Hall
Sun, May 3	Confirmation Sunday Worship at 10:00 am
Wed, May 6	Last Youth Group, Confirmation & Interns: Bowling at St Croix Lanes
Sun, May 10	Mother's Day - Worship at 10:00 am
Sun, May 17	Music Sunday - Worship at 10:00 am
Wed, May 20	Red Cross Blood Drive in Fellowship Hall 11:00 am to 5:00 pm
Sun, May 24	Pentecost Sunday - Summer Worship Moves to 9:30 am
Sun, May 31	Graduation Sunday - Worship at 9:30 am

## Spring Clean Up Thanks

Thanks to all who helped the Trustees clean up the church grounds for spring and summer. Even through the rain we raked, pruned and got our lawn and grounds ready for the growing season.

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## 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.



## Relay for Life Thanks

Thank you very much for your generous donations for Relay for life/American Cancer Society. The overwhelming support of Soup Night, Hotdish Night, and individual donation allowed our church to donate \$2,454 toward the River Fall Relay for Life. Your generous donations put our church into the Rising Star level of giving (donations greater than \$1000). The community Relay for Life event has raised over \$84,000. They will continue taking donations into August for the 2026 event.

Thank you also for all the wonderful cooks and clean-up volunteers who helped with the meals. The soups and hotdishes were delicious and fun to try. This church amazes me with its generosity, willingness to help, and its compassion for others. Thank you again and God Bless, Deb Hoffman



## Softball News

It's that time of the year when the temperatures are getting warmer and the grass is turning green that we think of fun outside activities like SOFTBALL. Once again, our church will sponsor a softball team in the River Falls Church Family League. The family league is a co-ed division allowing players to play at the age 14. The league prefers players to be 14 years old for safety reasons and it's the city league rules. The co-ed description requires teams to have three women on the field at all times, so ladies please don't be afraid to sign up and play.

The games are played on Monday evenings at Hoffman Park. Games will begin the first Monday after Memorial Day and continue until the middle of August. Practices will begin the first Monday of May.

To sign up there is a sign-up sheet on the table in the gathering area or contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, [debhoffman234b@gmail.com](mailto:debhoffman234b@gmail.com).

### Confirmation Sunday

Confirmation Sunday for our 9th graders will be **Sunday, May 3rd** at the 10:00 am worship service. A cake and reception in their honor will follow in the Fellowship Hall following worship that day.

### Music Sunday

Join us on **Sunday, May 17th** at 10:00 am for Music Sunday! Our bell choir and chancel choir will present some of their favorite music of the year. This is a chance not only to enjoy some great music but also to offer our appreciation for many, many Wednesdays spent in the church basement practicing. Please be sure to thank them and their directors, Jamie Mills who conducts the Bell Choir and Sarah Plum who conducts the Chancel Choir.



### Mother's Day

This year Mother's Day will be **Sunday, May 10**. Join us at the 10:00 am

Sunday worship service as we pray for and give thanks to all who are called to be Mothers. Flowers will be given to all the women in our lives.



### Graduation Sunday

Mark your calendars as we celebrate Graduation Sunday on **Sunday, May 31st** at the 9:30 am summer worship service. We will honor our graduating high school seniors as well as award church scholarships (which are due in the church office by Sunday, May 3rd). Let us celebrate their many accomplishments together as a church family!

## What the Pastor is Reading

*The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans

What would your life look like if you primarily wrote letters? For generations this is how we know history, from our letters and correspondences. But in an age of texting and emailing will any of that be around in a hundred years? This novel follows the quirky letters sent from a retired lawyer to her family, friends, and sometimes even letters to her enemies. It is an easy, wonderful read and as of today I am 20 pages from learning how it all ends!

*There is No Place for Us* by Brian Goldstone

I am reading this as part of the Wellspring Village Tiny Homes community project here in River Falls. The book has won numerous awards for his realistic portrayal of why housing insecurity is such a problem, especially among working folks. Most in our congregation would be shocked and surprised at home many people I encounter in our own community who have been on the verge of losing their homes. This is an important read if you want to better understand the issue.

## People in the Pews: Randy Welsh

1. Where did you grow up? New Glarus and Belleville, Wisconsin
2. Where do you live now? Hudson/Troy Township
3. How long have you been attending First Congregational Church? 43 years
4. What keeps you coming back to First Congregational? The 'All are welcome because everyone matters' emphasis and the opportunities to serve others. Most of all, the people and our Church leadership, Pastors Chris and Stacy.
5. What is your favorite hymn? "On Eagles Wings" It is inspirational.
6. What is your favorite childhood memory? Family trips to Lincoln, Nebraska to visit Grandma and Grandpa Stuve.
7. What is your favorite hobby or pastime? Music (Drumming) and Cars
8. Something about our family? I was a drummer for a rock band in southern Wisconsin for several years. Diane and I used to downhill ski.



## EarthFest Thanks

Thanks to all who turned out for the 2026 EarthFest at UWRF on Saturday, April 25th! This is the fifth year of this amazing community gathering that brings to together thousands of people in the common cause to better care for the gift of earth.

This year our church again had a table, and we made over 300 earth balls and gave out reusable dish clothes with the church logo. Thanks to our Mission Team who helped to sponsor this event and the many volunteers who helped staff our table.



## Endowment Grants

Each quarter the Endowment Grant Committee meets to evaluate proposals for new ministries and projects submitted through our church committees. Does your group have a new idea you want to pursue? Is there a need in the church or community your group wants to address? Consider applying for an Endowment Grant! All proposals must come from a committee, and the next due date is **July 5**. Forms can be accessed at church office or on the website.

## Needed Items

The choir is in need of more file drawer hanging file frames and folders for the choir music.

Please let the church office know if you have these items to donate. Thank you.



## 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](http://www.redcrossblood.org) and enter: [firstcongregationalrf](http://firstcongregationalrf) to schedule an appointment.



## Gardeners and Mowers Needed!

We love our church gardens and lawns! Please help us maintain them by joining our Garden Geeks and/or the Lawn Mowing Team. You sign up for a week that works for your busy schedule. Training is provided and it is so appreciated! Use the sign-up sheets or talk to Lu Lueck about Garden Geeks or the office for mowing.

## 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](mailto: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 <u>Apr 26 2026</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 2,180	\$ 172,398
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 192,236

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](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org)  
 Education: Stacy Myers - [stacy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:stacy@firstchurchrf.org)  
 Office: Missy Luedtke - [missy@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:missy@firstchurchrf.org)  
 Youth: Alex Plum - [rfyouthgroup@gmail.com](mailto:rfyouthgroup@gmail.com)  
 Music: Jamie Mills - [degolierjamie@gmail.com](mailto:degolierjamie@gmail.com)  
 Choir: Sarah Plum - [sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com)  
 Building: Farnum Fuller - [farnumfuller@gmail.com](mailto:farnumfuller@gmail.com)  
 Troy Zakrzewski - [ztruck51ford@gmail.com](mailto:ztruck51ford@gmail.com)  
 Maintenance: Tim Bylander - [timthefixitguy@gmail.com](mailto:timthefixitguy@gmail.com)

*SERVE*  
*generously*

## Grace Place

Supply needs:

- Shampoo - large or travel size
- Conditioner - large or travel size
- Body wash - large or travel size
- Body lotion - large or travel size
- New or like-new wash cloths
- New or like-new bath towels
- New or like-new hand towels
- New or like-new twin and full size sheets
- New or like-new twin and full size blankets
- New pillows
- 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](mailto: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 **May 12 & 26**.

## 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 **May 12 & 26**. Join us!

## Merry Widows

They will meet on **Wed, May 20, at 1:00 pm at Jonesy's Local in Hudson** (1801 Ward Ave between Maurices and the Bowling Alley). All widows are welcome to join for dinner & conversation! See Linda Morrow for more info.

## Game Day Sunday

Game Day Sunday is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next Game Days are **May 17 and June 21 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.

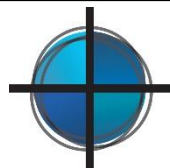
## Among Friends

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](http://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  
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RIVER FALLS

Office Phone: 715-425-2052  
E-mail: [office@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:office@firstchurchrf.org)  
Website: [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://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](mailto: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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RIVER FALLS, WI 54022  
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MAY 1, 2026

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### 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>

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### 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.

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### 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.