

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

October 1, 2026

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

**Everyone is welcome because
everyone matters.**



Pastor's Page

So when was the last time you failed at something? Not simply missed the mark or made a small mistake, but experienced a complete and total failure? We all fail at times. We disappoint others, fall short of our own expectations, and discover that our best intentions are not always enough. Those failures can be hard in the short term, but if we let them, they can also be life giving.

The apostle Peter knew that kind of failure. After promising that he would never abandon Jesus, Peter denied knowing him three times. Yet failure was not the end of his story. In John 21:15-19, the risen Jesus meets Peter beside the water, offering him grace, and entrusting him with a new calling: "Feed my sheep." Peter's failure became a place of forgiveness, learning, and growth.

The following poem by John Roedel invites us to see our own failures in much the same way – not as the end of our story, but as a place where something new can begin.

My old friend, Failure, showed up
at my door dressed like it was
attending a somber funeral
pressed dark suit,
mirrored sunglasses,
~ slick polished shoes

So

I gave Failure a bright red rose for
its lapel, a glass of champagne
and then kissed it on its pale cheek
Failure stared at me for a moment
before it finally spoke with a growl:
"Aren't you afraid of me?"

"No"

I explained to Failure that its
arrival wasn't the end of my story
~ but simply a plot twist.

I reminded Failure that it wasn't
there to preside over my death
~ it had come to baptize me into
my fresh start.

"Oh"

Then Failure took off its coat and
walked me down to the lake and
laid me out prone in the clear
water and I felt something inside
become brand new.

When it was over, Failure pulled
me up and hugged me to my
bones while whispering into my
ears its two word sermon:

"Now....
grow"

Failure and I said our goodbyes
knowing that we'd see each other
again soon.

I left Failure in the lake and sat by
the shore until I watched as it
became a swan.

And as I walked home, I thanked
the Great Unseen for our unlikely
friendship because Failure has
taught me just about everything
that I know.

~ John Roedel

In Gratitude, PC

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, October 4

Back Bay Mission April 2027
Trip Meeting – 11:00 am in the
Fellowship Hall

Sunday, October 4

College Pack Items Due at Church

Sunday, October 11

Bibles to 6th Graders and Servant
of Christ Aprons to 7th Graders
During Worship

Tuesday, October 13

Learning Community: Glacier,
Tetons and Yellowstone
National Parks

Tuesday, October 20

All Church Meeting Night
6:30 pm for Committees
7:30 pm for Church Council

Sunday, November 1

All Saints Sunday and Dedication
of Memorial Garden Plaque



Wednesday Night Family Meals Return October 7!

On Wednesday nights, we will 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. The menu will be:

Oct 7 - Taco bar

Oct 14 - Swedish meatballs, butter & parsley potatoes, vegetable, roll

Oct 21 - Beef stroganoff, noodles, salad, bread

Oct 28 - Chicken marsala, rice, asparagus, salad

Nov 4 - Boneless BBQ ribs, mac and cheese, butter & parsley potatoes, vegetable, roll

Nov 11 - Parmesan crusted chicken over rice pilaf, salad, croissant

Sunday Morning Bible Study

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

Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study

The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study is studying the extremely imaginative book, Revelation. Copies of the discussion book are available in the office for \$20 each. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.



Wednesday School

All children who are in kindergarten through Grade 5 are invited to participate in Wednesday School. Elementary students in River Falls are picked up at the four elementary schools in town at

the end of the school day. Wednesday School concludes at 5:15 pm.

Registration and permission forms are available on the church website and in the church office. It is important to have advance registration in order to be adequately prepared for students, particularly due to transportation needs. Wednesday School begins October 7.

Registration forms are due by Monday, October 5. Please contact Pastor Stacy with questions.



Bibles for 6th Graders

The congregation will present Bibles to six grade students during worship on **October 11.**

Wednesday School Volunteers Needed

Wednesday School begins on **October 7.** We have a big need for more volunteers to provide snacks on a rotating basis. Please sign up at church or online.

College Pack Items Needed!

One of the mission activities of the church youth program is to send College Packs to those off at school or the military. We ask each of our 6-12th grade families to bring items for the 30 College Packs we anticipate sending this year. Think necessary items, fun items and lightweight items as they will be shipped! Food is always good. So are dorms decs.

Please have them at church by Sunday, October 4. Thank you!



Relax with Rose - Breathwork Techniques

Thursday, October 29, 6:30-7:45 pm

Learn and practice several different breathwork techniques. These quick techniques will help you step back and relax in a stressful moment or reduce your racing thoughts so you can fall asleep faster.

For more information, contact Rose Rude at 715-781-7032 or rar651@gmail.com. Please sign up at church or online.

Inquirer's Class

New to church? Want to know more about our life and ministry? Join us on **Tuesday, October 27 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. At this gathering, you will meet church leaders, other new folks and learn more about First Congregational Church. Dessert and childcare are provided. Please sign up.



A LEARNING COMMUNITY

NATIONAL PARKS

Glacier • Yellowstone • Grand Teton

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13
6:30-8:00 PM

Learn how to plan your trip and discover
what to see and do. Already visited?
Come share your tips and favorite experiences!

Dessert will be served. Please sign up at church or online
and join us for a night in our National Parks!



Sunday School Teachers

First Congregational Church places a high value on education that includes Sunday School. Sunday School cannot happen without volunteers. Please recognize and thank the following people who teach in the Sunday School program:

Kaye Anderson, Marg Downing, Christina Krueger, Kim Korent, Jenny Luedtke, Jen Meyer, Stacy Myers, Becky Pajac, Alex Plum, MiKayla Sanocki, Mara Shepherd, Liz Swank, Vicki Swank, Erin Syverson, and Renee Whipple. Calpurnia Bastien and Kathy Tomlinson will begin teaching in January. Thank you!

First Church Companions

Are you interested in being a companion to someone in our church connecting with them at least once a month with a call or visit? Or would you like to have someone for a companion. Please use the sign-up sheet to be a companion or request someone to visit you.

Back Bay Mission Trip Planned for April 2027

Ever wanted to go on a mission trip? Heard about the awesome experiences so many of our church folks have had at UCC related Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi? Just want to get out of town to someplace warm? Join us! Our church is sponsoring yet another trip to Back Bay Mission, **April 18 - 24, 2027. A meeting will be held on Sunday, October 4 after worship in the Fellowship Hall.** Please contact Carol Merriman or Pastor Chris for details. Use the sign-up sheet to register your interest.

2026-27 Church Council

Thank you to our 2026-2027 church leaders! Each month our committees meet to plan and coordinate church programs and ministries. Many of them meet on the third Tuesday of each month on All Church Meeting Night. Following their hour-long meeting, the chairs or council representatives meet as the Church Council. Thank you to those who agreed to serve on Council for the current program year. This year we will be reading the book *Theology of Golden* to help us better flesh out our mission statement: Our mission is to love God and serve people; everyone is welcome because everyone matters. Please pray for wisdom for them as they seek to lead us this year.



Front row: Norma Revels, Jo Anne Friedell, Angie Knutson, Marie Roe, Lu Lueck, Carol Merriman
Back row: David Reilly, Chris Myers, Paul Shepherd, Louie Filkins
Missing from photo: Missy Luedtke

Learning Community: The Churches of River Falls

As a community of faith, one of our values is life-long learning. To support adult education, we provide periodic Learning Community events on a wider variety of topics. The October Learning Community will be about planning a National Parks tour. The November Learning Community event will focus on churches in River Falls. Why? Well, churches, like old houses, barns, gas stations, and train stations, are intriguing. They were built with vision, determination, and hope. As time marched on some church buildings were lost to fire or storms. Some were remodeled, moved, or repurposed. Congregation member Mark Anderson will show slides of the early churches of River Falls and what became of them. He will share a few stories, artifacts, and memories with the slides. If you have pictures or artifacts to share, please bring them along! The event will be on **Tuesday, November 10, at 6:30 pm**. Please sign up at church or online.

What The Pastor is Reading

The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis - This is one of the old classics that somehow I never read. I found it quoted for a third time recently so thought I better read it. The devotional text was written way back in the 1400s and is divided into four books of detailed spiritual instructions: "Helpful Counsels of the Spiritual Life," "Directives for the Interior Life," "On Interior Consolation," and "On the Blessed Sacrament." Stay tuned.

Basics for Local Kids (BLK)

BLK is a non-profit organization that provides winter-wear to local kids in need from infant to 18 years old. Please consider making a donation of gently used or new coats, snow pants, boots, hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, or socks. Donations can be placed in the bin near the alley door entrance.

Beginning in October volunteers are needed to help families shop, or to sort and restock items. To volunteer go to www.BasicsforLocalKids.org or call Kim Johnson at 715-821-1623. Thank you for your generous, continuing support. Other questions contact Renee Whipple 715-307-5074.

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

September 15, 2026

Treasurer's Report – Missy - (introduction to reading the report given to new members of Council). Funds were transferred from the Endowment Fund to bring Missions obligations up to date. Donations should pick up by the end of the year. A reminder to Council that the Among Friends is self-funded but payroll is run through the church. Marie: reminder that committee budgets must be completed and submitted to Missy in November (for 2027).

New Business:

Council book read for 2026-27 proposal - Theo of Golden by Allen Levi - book discussion could occur over several months. Pastor Chris will order books for Council members.

Old Business:

New committee members - committee rosters to Missy with contact information

New AED – Chris - Carole is submitting grant requests for a new battery. Will schedule refresher class for use as well as a CPR class.

Memorial Garden Sign Update – Marie: the sign will be dedicated on Nov 1st - All Saints Sunday. \$3000.00 endowment grant funds requested.

Front two trees replacement – Louie - NWI Tree Service will provide estimates of costs and guarantee. St Croix Elm was recommended as the replacement tree. Japanese Lilac Tree. Time estimate: 2-3 weeks

October 20 Meeting with WI Conf UCC Rep at 5pm for working dinner - confirmed – Chris - Listening session to obtain information to assist in future church growth.

Tuck Pointing and Building Issues – Louie - no new information at this time.

Minister for Community Update – Marie - Team: Alan T, Marie E, Suzanne H, Kathy R, Chris M, Carol M - mission accomplished!

Ministry

Christian Education (Angie) - Sunday School has started. Do have 15 teachers. Orientation for Interns and Wednesday School went well. Discussion about a Parent Learning Event. Possible program by Erin Walsh.

Deacons (Paul) - Orientation meeting for the 4 new members, New Member Class on October 27th.

Discipleship (Chris) - 5 new members of the 6 on the committee.

Endowment Grant (Norma) - Balance is \$10,550.00 - \$3000 request to review with the potential of another request.

Mission Education (Carol) - 1 new member and Pastor Bob. Updates on the Mission Partners. Journey House will be providing a Mission Moment.

Music (Dave) - April 11th - Norwegian concert pianist will perform (Oda), planning in place for fall performance, potential for 2028 performance of Silent Movie Night.

Personnel (Alan in late fall) - no report

Trustees (Louie) - 2 new members, bat situation reviewed. Fire suppression system will be checked on Tuesday. Room 101 will be painted, Trustees will begin to sign up to assist with coffee fellowship,

Welcoming Ministry (Lu) - Discussion about changes on how Welcoming may improve approaches towards guests.

Pastor (Chris) - Request to city for change to parking restrictions in front of church denied, FMSC event: 139,968 meals packed with 100 participants from our church. Plan to have special t-shirts made next year. Scheduling a sabbatical in May-July 2027 (more information available in October). Rally day - Sunday September 13, return of Sunday School, Bible Study and 10 am service. Giving Thanks Sunday on November 15th with meal and dedication Sunday. New Members class scheduled for October 27th.

Moderator (Marie) - working on a new bookmark made with the new mission statement,

WISE - (Dave) - therapeutic music concert went well. About 25 attendees. Rose Rude will be offering information on Mindful Breathing

NEXT MEETING: October 20 remember dinner at 5pm!

Respectfully submitted by Jo Anne Friedell, Council Clerk

Endowment Grants

Each quarter the Endowment Grant Committee meets to evaluate proposals for new ministries and projects submitted through our church committees. 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 dates are **October 4 & December 6**. Forms can be accessed at church office or on the website.

Among Friends Volunteers Needed

The program meets two days a week. 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



Red Cross Blood Drive

The next Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church is on **Wed, Nov 25, 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.



Among Friends Board Members Needed

Among Friends is a respite program for families with dementia. They need board members.

They meet on the second Monday of each month at 4:00 pm. Please see Norma Revels for details.

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.

For mental health issues, please call 988. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Treasurer's Report

	Week of Sept 20, 2026	Year to Date
General Fund Income*	\$ 4,991	\$ 418,479
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 11,308	\$ 429,704

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
Mission: Bob Wang - pbobcca@outlook.com
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



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)
- Adult socks
- Belts
- Shampoo, conditioner, body wash & lotion-large or travel size
- 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 firstroe@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 **Oct 13 & 27**.

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 **Oct 13 & 27**. Join us!

Merry Widows

They will meet on **Wed, Oct 21, at 1:00 pm at Juniors in River Falls**. 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 Day is **Oct 18 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.

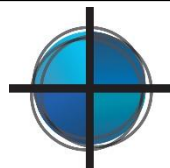
Among Friends

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

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FIRST
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CHURCH, UCC
RIVER FALLS

Office Phone: 715-425-2052
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Website: www.firstchurchrf.org

STAFF

Chris Myers, Pastor
Stacy Johnson, CE Minister
Bob Wang, Minister for Community and Outreach
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

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

110 N. Third Street
River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

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PERMIT #53

RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

OCTOBER 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.