



FIRST

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

God is still speaking,

110 N. Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022
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Rev. Chris Myers: chris@firstchurchrf.org
Office email: office@firstchurchrf.org
DECEMBER 15, 2011

Pastor's Corner

Somewhere between Housewares and Sporting Goods, you may hear it. It may enter your consciousness as you're trolling the latest smartphones over in Electronics. Or, you may find yourself unconsciously humming the tune, as you're puzzling over whether a large or extra-large Christmas sweater will do for that out-of-town relative you haven't seen in some time.

*For we need a little Christmas,
Right this very minute,
Candles in the window,
Carols at the spinet.
Yes, we need a little Christmas,
Right this very minute,
Need a little Christmas now!*

There's nothing wrong with needing a little Christmas. It's what so many are searching for on their expeditions through the wilds of the shopping mall. Armed with checklists and coupons, supplied with sensible shoes and plenteous plastic charge cards, these latter-day explorers are vigilant and wise in the ways of merchandising.

They're looking for the perfect gift: an expression of love (or, at the very least, high regard). It's a wonderful, caring thing to do, Christmas shopping. It's fun, most of the time. That is, until you encounter one too many surly clerks, or discover that the perfect sweater you've chosen is excluded from the sale prices, or realize to your dismay that this shopping trip has gone on too long, and you're footsore, hungry and weary.

Is a little Christmas really what we're looking for?

Or, is what we really need the Great Christmas: not the coming of the latest trendy toy to the mall, but the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ into the world?

Come and join us as we worship the birth of Emmanuel, God with each and every one of us.



Christmas Eve Worship, Saturday, December 24

4:00pm—Family service with candles

6:00pm—Family service with candles and communion

11:00pm—Midnight candlelight service with communion and choir



Christmas Day Worship, Sunday December 25

10:00am—One Worship service with LOTS of Christmas music

New Year's Day Worship, Sunday, January 1

10:00am—One Worship service

No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!

We believe...

~The Christian faith is a life-long learning process.

~Our church family aspires to be the living presence of Christ in the world.

~Our faith in Jesus is demonstrated through our lives, actions, and commitments.

~We are striving to become a congregation of life-long givers.

~Worship is the center of our life together.

Advent 2011

The Psalms during this coming Advent season contain the words 'to restore.' Our human dilemma is that all of us spend a great deal of time groping in the dark. This is much deeper than an earlier sunset or the end of daylight savings time. Too often we feel lost, alone and especially in recent times, afraid of the future. This Advent, I invite you to join us on a journey of restoration, looking to the Light God sends into the world in Jesus Christ.

Advent 1—November 27	Restoration of HOPE	Chancel choir sings
Advent 2—December 4	Restoration of PEACE	Praise Group
Advent 3—December 11	Restoration of JOY	Choir and Bells Christmas Music
Advent 4—December 18	Restoration of LOVE	Children's Christmas Program
Christmas Eve	Worship at 4, 6 and 11pm	Cider in Fellowship Hall
Christmas Day	One Worship Service at 10:00am	

Advent Marketplace

"The Marketplace" offers an opportunity to buy Christmas gifts in a loved one's honor that will benefit people in need. Gifts this year include: blankets, chicks, educational toys, tree seedlings, gardening tools and seeds, small business grants, and emergency shelter kits. The monetary gifts will be sent to Church World Service who will in turn provide the tangible gifts to communities around the world. Shoppers at the Advent Marketplace will receive a card and information regarding the selected gift.



Advent Evening Prayer

Advent Evening Prayer services will be held on **December 14 and 21**. Dinner will be served from 5:00 to 6:15 pm. Worship will be from 6:30 to 7:00 pm. It will be a lovely, contemplative service. Please come. Please make a reservation for the meal if you plan to attend.

E-Giving—More and more parishioners are signing up for e-giving. It is quick, easy, and safe. It is designed to help both you with your home budgeting and financing of church ministries which continue even when you are away. Simply complete the application form found in the back sign-up area to enroll. Questions can be directed to our church treasurer Missy Luedtke or Bill Herris and Larry Bauer on the Discipleship Committee. If you already give electronically, please use the e-giving bookmarks in your pew as the offering plate goes by.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

The First Thursday Bible Study will be held on **January 5, 9:30-10:00 am**, led by Stacy Myers. All are welcome!

Annual Reports are Due

I need your Annual Reports no later than January 15th.

I would prefer them electronically, but if that is not possible, I will accept a hard copy.

Thank you. Lu

Moderator Notes: December Discipleship

These early December weeks are ripe for reflection, if we take the time. Thanksgiving is not far past, and Advent's anticipation is upon us. This makes a very appropriate time for us as modern day disciples—despite all our activities—to consider our 2012 commitments to this church.

One of the many ways I “Count Myself Blessed” is captured by the word “connection.” Through inspiring worship services, I connect to God. Through your faces, hugs and handshakes on Sunday mornings & at Thanksgiving dinners, at committee meetings and cleaning up construction dust, I stay connected with long-time friends and make new ones. Through conversations at adult forums or gazing at our time-line pictures or helping with Wednesday school, I connect with bedrock beliefs in a 21st century context. Through supporting Our Neighbor's Place, measuring rice at Feed My Starving Children, adding an undies package to the Viking or Packer box, or contributing to a women's sewing project in Africa (stop by the Advent Marketplace!), I connect to people in need here at home and around the world.

I wrote a newsletter piece in October about our “webs of caring.” We have a wonderful web here of people, programs, services and facilities – all intertwined and centered in our Christian faith. I encourage us all to maintain, strengthen and grow those webs with our financial, time and talent contributions.

In fellowship, Suzanne Hagen, Moderator

TREASURER'S NOTES

Missy Luedtke

	<u>Dec 11, 2011</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Budget Income	\$ 7,528.81	\$ 318,442.66
Budget Requirements	\$ 6,837.65	\$ 341,882.50

A full accounting of all income and expenses is always posted outside the church office door on the bulletin board.

Finances

We are significantly behind on our church giving. We need your help in the following ways.

1. If you have pledged and are behind, please try to catch up.
2. If you are on track on your giving, consider giving an extra gift.
3. If you have not pledged, please give your financial support NOW.

The need is very real and affects the day to day funding of our ministries. Thank you for your financial support.

Inquirer's Class

Those who are new to the church and would like to know more about its life and ministry are invited to come to the Inquirer's Class on **Sunday, January 8 at 11:30am**. The purpose of the class is:

1. To learn more about the ministry and programs of First Congregational Church
2. To meet other people who are new to our faith community
3. To meet church leaders and staff.



Lunch is served and childcare is available. Our time together should be about 90 minutes including lunch. Completion of the class is the first step toward church membership.

Cribbage Anyone?

Anyone interested in playing cribbage here at the church one evening a month, **beginning Monday, January 9th at 7:00 pm**, please sign the sheet on the sign-up table. We will meet the second Monday of each month. See Duane Church for more info.

New Building Open House

Many people have asked when we will have an Open House to unveil our new building. Phase three of the building project (renovation underneath the sanctuary) will be complete around the end of December. We have tentatively scheduled an Open House for **Sunday, February 12, from 1:00-4:00 pm**. Additionally, the Building and Finance Committees are planning a celebration dinner for all those who have pledged to the Building Fund as a way of thanking them. This will take place in early spring. Please look to the newsletter, Weekly Word and bulletin announcements for more information.



Children's Advent Musical

Children in Pre-School through Grade 5 will present *How the Bells Chimed*, a musical that tells a story of sacrificial giving at Christmas time. Peggy Krasin is the director and Judith Permann is the accompanist. The musical will be presented during the 10:30 worship service on December 18.

Family Conversation Starter Booklets

Available—Regular family meals are correlated with healthy behaviors in children and teens. The Christian Education committee created a small booklet with questions and ideas to generate table conversations. The booklets are available in the church office. Please take one and feel free to pass one on to a family you know.

Adult Forum

December 18: *Mary's Story*, Alan Tuchtenhagen—Time and time again the Bible tells us that God chooses unlikely people to do God's work. A young teenager was not a likely choice to be the mother of Jesus, and yet that was God's choice. The forum will consider Mary's story.

January 8, 15: *Food and Faith*, Alan Tuchtenhagen—The planet is in the midst of a food crisis: millions of people are starving or severely malnourished, obesity is drastically increasing, crops are turned into ethanol, much of the food people eat is highly processed. How can people of faith make sense of what to eat and how our eating impacts other people and the environment?

Sub Drivers Needed for Sundays

Hal Ohlsen is our regular volunteer driver on Sundays but he is out of town frequently for his job. We are looking for a few subs that can fill in for him. He picks up four ladies about 10AM and takes them home after second service. We have three subs at present but they too are often out of town. If you could help us out please call Lu in the church office. Thank you.

Gift to the New Building

For years women of the church have met for fellowship, education, and service. For many of these years they were the "Women's Fellowship" and were instrumental in organizing the Spring Fling and the Fall Affair. The women designated the money they helped raise for scholarships to Moon Beach, the Simpson Shelter, Back Bay Mission, and other ministries of the congregation. The women also carefully saved money for a new kitchen. Now that the new kitchen is a reality, they have presented \$12,000 to the building fund. This generous gift represents the work of many hands over many years.

Holiday Office Hours

Please note the following office hours during the holiday season:
Monday, Dec 26 & Friday, Dec 30—Closed

All financial donations need to be dropped off at the church office by **noon on December 29** to be credited for 2011.

Christmas Musical Rehearsal: Grades 1 – 5

All children in grades 1 – 5 are asked to participate in the Saturday rehearsal for the Christmas musical. The rehearsal will be held from 10:00 AM to 12:00, noon on Saturday, December 17. It is critically important for all first through fifth graders to be in attendance. Pre-School and Kindergarten children are part of the musical, but they do not need to attend the Saturday rehearsal. **All children in Pre-School through Grade 5 are asked to dress in black for the Christmas musical during the 10:30 worship service on December 18.**



Puppet Ministry

The 'Puppet Force' Ministry Group needs your strong "arms" [2nd grade & up, middle/high school, & adults] for an upcoming performance in February. **There will be a short informational meeting on Sunday, December 18 between services @ 10:00 & following the 10:30 service in the youth room.** Rehearsal date/times for this short-term commitment will be discussed at the meeting. Not sure what your "arms" will fit into - how about puppets, prop/scenery design/building, or helping behind the scenes? The possibilities are endless! So, come join the fun & see for yourself what "Puppet Fever" is all about. Questions? Call Cheryl Solberg @ 715.377.1028 or 715.220.9844. Hope to see you!

YoUthCC Corner

Poinsettia/Blanket: The sale of Christmas poinsettias and blankets runs through December 11. The poinsettias will be on display at the Christmas Eve services & available for pick up after the 11:00 pm service or after worship on Christmas Day at 10:00 am. Another way to honor a loved one is through the gift of a blanket through Church World Service. Both blankets & poinsettias may be "in Honor of" or "in Memory of" someone special to you. Order forms this year are combined with items from the Advent Marketplace. Forms can be found in the narthex. Any questions regarding the poinsettias/blankets, please contact Deb Hoffman @ 425-5633.

Youth Christmas Party: This year we are having a party for the post-confirmation kids on **Wednesday, December 21 at 7:30 pm.** The event is open to all youth, tenth grade and older. This includes those that have gone off to college or those that are home working. There will be lots food and fun. The party will be held in the NEW Youth room. Come join the FUN and bring some munchies to share. More details to come as the evening gets closer. Please let Deb know if you think you can attend via Facebook or by phone (715-425-5633).

Christmas Bake Sale: The last of the Christmas fundraisers is the annual bake sale held on **Sunday, December 18.** Here's a chance to purchase some yummy goodies for yourself or to share at Christmas gatherings. Youth—Please have your items to the church by 9:30 am, prepped for sale. The bake sale will be held between services and after the 10:30 Children's Christmas Program.

Thank you all who so generously support our youth. God Bless, Deb Hoffman

National Youth Event

The National Youth Event, held every four years, provides an opportunity for over 3000 youth (ages 13 to 18) to gather for worship, workshops, faith, fun and fellowship. This year UCC kids will gather from all fifty states and from all over the globe thanks to the presence of youth from our partner churches overseas. The dates are July 10-13, 2012 in Lafayette, Indiana on the campus of Purdue University. Pastor Chris is planning on going this year and hopes to take a bunch of youth and other adult chaperones. Interested? Please see Pastor Chris. We will need at least 3 adult chaperones for this trip.

Katie Jo Fuller Ordination

It is always a joy to participate in an ordination—the recognition of someone as an ordained pastor. First Congregational Church rejoices that our own Katie Jo Fuller has been approved for ordination and received a call to be Assistant Pastor at St. John's UCC, Collinsville, IL. Her Ordination Service will be at First Congregational on **Sunday, January 22 at 3:00 pm** with a reception to follow. Her Ecclesiastical Council (an opportunity for people to ask Katie Jo questions and get to know her better) will be held on Saturday, January 21 at 11:00 am, also at First Congregational. Please mark your calendars so you can be a part of this special event.

Thank You to....

- ~ Ginny Hilden, Mary Church and all the other men and women who helped prepare, serve and clean up after the Forehand and Amacker funerals.
 - ~ Our faithful Wednesday School volunteers, especially Christina Krueger, Mary Church and Jen Syverson who week after week ensure kids are loved by God and grow in Christ's grace.
 - ~ All who moved chairs this past week. In 90 minutes, we had 300 chairs unloaded, unwrapped and in place in our new Fellowship Hall. Thank you!
-

Marcus Borg Presentation

Embracing an Adult Faith: Why Didn't Anyone Tell Me This Before?

April 20-21, 2012

Friday Evening: 6:00 pm Registration and 7:30-9:00 pm Presentation

Saturday: 8:00 am Registration and 9:00-3:00 pm Presentation

New Richmond High School, 650 Richmond Way, New Richmond, WI 54017

Registration fee:

\$55.00 per person Early Bird Special before April 1, 2012

\$65.00 per person by deadline April 8, 2012 — We have limited seating!

Contact riverfallsumc.org to register for this event, or call the River Falls UMC office 1-715-425-6233

A NOTE OF



Pastor Chris and the First Congregational Church - United Church of Christ Congregation: The Family of Roy Forehand would like to extend our heartfelt thank you to all who participated/helped in his funeral, helped over the years with rides, visits and conversation or just offered a smile to an elderly man who enjoyed people. My father would have been so touched by the kind words that were shared with us, his family. As many of you know, he was a gentle man with a gentle soul. He loved to help those less fortunate and considered himself blessed.

Though it was with great sadness that we sad "goodbye for now," it was with joy in our hearts that he went home to be with his Lord and once again be with our mother.

Blessings to each one of you. ~The Family of Roy Forehand

Christmas Fund

It's that time of year again—a joyous time for giving gifts. The UCC's Christmas Fund, this year called "You Can Help Us Say Yes," aids those who have served the church and need financial support during retirement. The Christmas Fund is one of five UCC all-church offerings. It provides Christmas gift checks to low-income, retired clergy & their widowed spouses. It also supplies emergency assistance & helps finance pension & health benefit supplementation for retired clergy and lay persons. The need for your support remains great. Many pastors continue to work in rural areas with minimal salary and little or no benefits. They enter retirement with limited resources. We invite you to be part of a special campaign to help those that give so much to the church. Your gift has a lasting impact in a variety of ways. ~Mission Education Committee



Coffee Matters

The price of the Cloudforest coffee offered for sale at the church has increased. The price has been constant for several years and in recent years the cost of coffee has increased dramatically. The new prices are:

1 LB regular	\$11.00	5 LB regular	\$51.25
1 LB decaf	\$12.00	5 LB decaf	\$56.25

The coffee is grown in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, by small, independent farmers. These are some of the poorest people in this hemisphere. Please consider helping them out by buying some of their coffee. It is truly excellent coffee.

Our Neighbors' Place— Immediate Need

Do you have a new or gently used snow blower that is taking up space in your garage that you are no longer in need of? Or are you looking for a home for your current blower since you have upgraded with a newer model? Our Neighbors' Place-Homeless Shelter is in need of a small snow blower for clearing the 4-plex driveway.

Also needed is a donation of several sturdy snow shovels for shelter residents to use to clear their individual sidewalks.

Please contact us at the Day Center 715-426- 9000 or by e-mailing us at ourneighborsplace@gmail.com

*"Faith is taking the first step even
when you don't see the whole
staircase."*

~Martin Luther King, Jr.

Turningpoint Update

Consider sponsoring a Turningpoint family. If you are interested in sponsoring a family from Turningpoint, please contact Alena at 715-425-6751 ext. 104 for more information.

Also, here is a list of holiday needs for Turningpoint:

- Pajamas (for women sizes medium, large, extra-large)
- Robes and slippers
- Candles
- DVDs (family movies)
- Kitchen stuff (pots and pans, utensils, décor, dishes)
- Items for teens
- Gift cards
- Gas cards
- Sheet sets (twin, double, full, queen)
- Bath and beauty gift sets
- Gift cards for oil changes
- Gift cards for local restaurants
- Movie tickets for local theaters
- Purses
- Nail polish
- Make up
- Curling irons, blow dryers, hair accessories
- Family board games
- Any new item will be accepted and greatly appreciated!

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

STAFF



Chris Myers - Pastor
 Lu Lueck - Parish Coordinator
 Missy Luedtke - Office Assistant
 Stacy Johnson - CE Minister
 Scott Perau - Music Coordinator
 Organists - Marsha Pearson,
 Barb Wall
 Tim Bylander - Building Supervisor
 Dave Mountain - Custodian
 Suzanne Hagen - Moderator

Office Phone: 715-425-2052
 Office E-mail: office@firstchurchrf.org
 Website: www.firstchurchrf.org

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

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PERMIT #53
 RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

December 15, 2011

2011 DECEMBER 2011						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
11 8:00 am Chancel Choir 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast	12 Mission Education Mtg 5:00 pm Celebration Subcommittee Mtg 6:00 pm Deacons Mtg 6:30 pm Church Council Mtg 7:00 pm	13 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am 2nd Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's Trustees Mtg 6:30 pm	14 3:30 pm Wednesday School 5-6:30 pm Family Meal 6:30-7 pm Evening Prayer Service 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 2 (8th & 9th Grades) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 8:00 pm Music Committee Mtg 9:00 pm Worship Service on Channel 16	15 Yoga 9-10:00 am Worship Service on Chnl 16 12:00 pm	16	17 Christmas Program Rehearsal 10:00 am-12:00 Noon
18 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am Worship Service — Children's Christmas Program 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast	19	20 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am 3rd Tuesday 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	21 3:30 pm Wednesday School 5-6:30 pm Family Meal 6:30-7 pm Evening Prayer Service 6:30 pm Pre-Confirmation (6th Gr) 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 1 (7th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm High School Youth Christmas Party 9:00 pm Worship Service on Chnl 16	22 No Yoga Worship Service on Chnl 16 12:00 pm	23	24 Christmas Eve Worship Services at 4:00, 6:00 and 11:00 pm
25 Christmas Day 10:00 am Worship Service 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast	26 Church Office Closed	27 No Yoga 4th Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	28 No Wednesday Activities	29 No Yoga	30 Church Office Closed	31

Yoga Classes

Yoga classes will resume Tuesday, January 10, 2012 from 9:00 to 10:00 am. Classes are held in the Youth Room in the lower level of the church every Tuesday and Thursday. Bring a yoga mat and join the group!

Yoga Donations

Donations by yoga participants are saved throughout our year together. At Christmas, the group makes a decision on where to share the proceeds. This year, contributions were shared with the General Fund of the Congregational Church, Sharing Families (a project of the River Falls Journal) and ARC (Area Resource Center).