



FIRST

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

God is still speaking,

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Office email: office@firstchurchrf.org
DECEMBER 15, 2010

Pastor's Corner

It can be hard some days to have hope. Hope that the world will change. Hope that we will change. Hope that anything will change. This is especially true at Christmas.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the "Prince of Peace." Yet some 2000 years after his birth, wars still rage around the world. And if we are honest with ourselves we will admit to the little wars and petty betrayals that erupt in our hearts every day.

The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is the "Comforter" and "Advocate" sent by God to help free us from all that holds us back. Yet centuries after the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, too often we feel alone and powerless. It is hard sometimes to have hope that things will change.

I heard a wonderful interview this past week about a pastor who serves a church in one of the worst neighborhoods in New York City. The church has been vandalized, broken into, and desecrated numerous times. Still this small church continues to worship and open its doors to the community. The interviewer asked the pastor why he had hope that things would get better? The pastor didn't say a word, he just took the interviewer up to the roof of the church. "From up here," said the pastor, "I can see beyond the junkies and drug pushers. From up here I can see beyond my own street to the city as a whole. From up here I get a better perspective, I get a hint of God's perspective. Remember, I am a person of the book, the Bible. I know the ending. And in the end I know God wins. That's what gives me hope. That's what keeps me going. That's what keeps this church doing what it needs to do."

So here is to hope. Hope that the coming of the Christ child who changed the world, will begin with us.

I hope to see you at one of the three Christmas Eve worship services. Bring your whole family and bring a friend too.

Pastor Chris

Christmas Eve Worship Services

Family Christmas Eve Worship Service	4 pm
Family Christmas Eve Worship (Communion)	6 pm
Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship (Communion)	11 pm

Please consider inviting others to join you for Christmas Eve Worship.

Poinsettias and Blankets—Orders are due by **December 12**. Forms are available on the sign-up table or contact the church office.

Advent Marketplace will be open again through Sunday, December 19. Please consider these gifts as you do your Christmas shopping.

Children's Christmas Program will be held during the 10:30 service on Sunday, December 19. Please join us!

Advent Evening Prayer Service will be held on **Wednesday, December 15**. Dinner will be served from 5:00 to 6:15 pm. Worship will be from 6:30–7:00. It will be a lovely, contemplative service. Please come.

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 Evening Prayer

An Advent Evening Prayer service will be held on **Wednesday, December 15**. Dinner will be served from 5:00 to 6:15. The menu includes beef stew and vegetarian curried stew. Worship will be from 6:30 – 7:00. It will be a lovely, contemplative service. Please come.



The Ecumenical Giving Tree

There are just a few ornaments left on the tree and the deadline for returning gifts is **Monday, December 13, by 9:00 am**. If you could help us out we would appreciate it. **Thank you** once again this year for letting the community know who we are and what we believe.

Relay for Life 2011—March 25-26

Anyone interested in joining our team, plan to meet on **Sunday, December 12** during Coffee Fellowship. We will discuss team fundraising ideas. If you have any questions, please call Marie Roe at 715-381-1215.

Special Office Hours

Please note that the church office will be closed on Monday, December 27 and Friday, December 31. We will be open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday during our normal hours of 8:30 to 4:30 pm.

NEW Church Directory

There have been many inquiries about having a new directory. We need 2 good leaders to head up this project. If you are interested in helping to coordinate this effort, please contact Lu in the church office.

INVITE the OLD-FASHIONED WAY

Just a reminder that there are always *Invitations* on hand for your use. (You can find them on the sign-up table, in the office and the brochure racks.) If you know someone that may enjoy coming to church, give them an invitation. Upcoming special dates and our Adult Forum topics are included, and you can add your own personal "Hope you can join me." You never know who is just waiting to be asked!

Welcomers Wanted

Time to check your calendars and choose a Sunday to take your turn being that smiling Welcomer we all love to see at the church door on Sunday morning. It is an easy and very rewarding job. Please see the new November through April sign-up list. Prime dates will disappear soon so don't delay!

Upcoming Dates

Advent Marketplace

Advent Event Prayer Service & Family Meal

Children's Dress Rehearsal for Advent Musical

Children's Advent Musical

Christmas Eve Worship

November 28, December 5, 12, 19

December 15

December 18—10:00 am to 12:00 noon

December 19

December 24—4:00, 6:00 and 11:00 pm

Christmas Musical: *The Christmas Guest*

The dress rehearsal for children in kindergarten through grades 5 will be on **Saturday, December 18, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon**. It is critically important for all students to be present for rehearsals. Even though pre-schoolers are part of the musical, they **DO NOT** need to attend the dress rehearsal. The musical will be presented on Sunday, December 19 during the 10:30 worship service.

All children in Pre-School through Grade 5 are asked to dress in black for the musical on December 19.

TREASURER'S NOTES

Missy Luedtke

Financial Information for November and YTD:

	<u>November</u>	<u>2010 YTD</u>
Income	\$ 24,038.96	\$ 288,835.20
Expenses	\$ 25,800.30	\$ 270,441.46
Net	\$ -1,761.34	\$ -7,406.56

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

We are slowly making headway at reducing our 2010 deficit. Please consider catching up on your pledge or giving an extra gift.

Christmas Thanks

I thank all of you in this church for the special kindness you have shown to myself and my family. Please know that we treasure the ministry we accomplish together. Thank you for the cards and gifts. We try to thank you individually, but with anonymous gifts it is harder. May you all have a blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year! Pastor Chris

Van Driver Needed (or your own auto)

There are getting to be more people that are asking for a ride to church on Sunday mornings. Hal Ohlsen has been our constant volunteer but he can't be here every Sunday and we only have 3 subs to draw from. If you could possibly sub, please call Lu in the church office.

Yoga Classes

Yoga is held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:00 am. They meet in the Sunday School area. Please bring a yoga mat and a large bath towel. Any questions, call Jan Hansen at 425-5211.

Thursday Morning Bible Study with Oatmeal

The First Thursday Bible Study will be held on **January 6 at 9:30 am**, led by Stacy Myers. The morning will begin with baked oatmeal followed by a Bible study. All are welcome!

Memorial Service for Lucile Kitzerow will be held on **Tuesday, December 28 at 11:00 am** with a lunch immediately following the service. Please remember her niece Ann and Bob Gustafson in your prayers.



Thank you to the Phillipps' family for providing the Christmas tree in the sanctuary. And many thanks to the Filkins' family for putting it up and decorating it.

First Congregational Reads

“First Congregational Reads” is now a well-established tradition. This year’s selection is *Putting Away Child Things* by Marcus J. Borg. Borg is well-known for his non-fiction writings in the areas of theology and biblical interpretation. In this work of fiction Borg explores questions such as: What does the Bible really teach? Who is Jesus? What is the nature of faith for today?

There will be three different opportunities to discuss the book: in the Adult Forum on January 30 and February 6, and the evening of February 10. Books are available in the church office for \$17.00.

Adult Forum

December 12: *Waiting for the Messiah*, Stacy Johnson Myers

The forum will consider ancient expectations of a Messiah and wonder how and why Jesus came to be recognized as the leader for whom the world waited.

December 19: *Advent Texts and Images*, Ruth Reilly

Scripture texts during Advent are filled with powerful ideas and images. The forum will invite thought and reflection grounded in Advent texts, an image from the St. John’s Bible, and realities of our world today.

December 26 and January 2—No Adult Forum

January 9, 16: *Living Wills and Health Care Directives*, Gwen Kuchevar

Preparing loved ones to make end-of-life decisions on your behalf is important. Attorney and First Congregational member Gwen Kuchevar will help participants in the Adult Forum understand legal issues related to living wills and health care directives.

January 23: *Biblical Contradictions*, Stacy Johnson Myers

The Bible is filled with ideas and experiences; some of which are contradictory. How do we navigate biblical contradictions? What questions do they pose for us as biblical interpreters?

Jesus Core: Youth Retreat for Senior High Schoolers

The Wisconsin Conference Youth Ministry Team is sponsoring a winter retreat at the Pilgrim Center Camp in Green Lake, WI. Dates are January 7-9 and cost is \$135 with scholarship available. See bulletin board or Pastor Chris for more information.

Youth Opportunity: Travel to General Synod

The General Synod meets every second year. It is a gathering of UCC folks from across the country and the globe. This year’s Synod is in Tampa, Florida from June 29 to July 5. The Wisconsin Conference is organizing a youth delegation from UCC churches across Wisconsin. Cost is \$480 inclusive. Please see bulletin board or Pastor Chris for more details.

A NOTE OF



Dear First Congregational Church, Thank you so much for the care package. It was an unexpected and great surprise. I especially enjoyed the snacks. Thanks again, Alex Brettingen

Church Interns to Serve Meal

Envyng the success of their younger church brothers and sisters, the church interns will be serving the Tuesday Banquet meal at St Bridget’s at the end of January. Our plan is to cook on Monday night, January 24 and serve the meal at St B’s from 4 to 6pm on Tuesday, January 25. If you would like to help us cook, please see Pastor Chris. We are always in need of adult helpers and cooking ideas!

Advent Marketplace

“The Marketplace” is open during the remaining Sundays in Advent. At the Marketplace people will be able to buy Christmas gifts in a loved one’s honor that will benefit vulnerable people around the world. Gifts this year include: clean water and well technology, sewing machines, wheelbarrows, and soccer balls. 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 First’s Advent Marketplace will receive a card, information regarding the selected gift, and a small Christmas ornament. Please consider the Advent Marketplace gifts as you make your 2010 shopping lists.



COFFEE MATTERS

This holiday season please consider **Cloudforest coffee** as a stocking stuffer or hostess gift. **Cloudforest coffee**, offered for sale in the church lobby, is grown by small, independent farmers in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. Descendants of the ancient Maya, they are among the poorest people in this hemisphere and being able to sell their coffee at **Fair Trade** prices is extremely important to them. The coffee is also **organic** and **shade grown**, and delicious!

ARC Volunteers Needed

The Assistance & Resource Center Inc. (ARC) is in need of board members as several will be rotating off in the spring. It is a good time to step forward as you will be able to partner with a board member or be on a committee for publicity, fundraising, or grant writing. Please give it prayerful thought as the ministers and community do depend on this program. ARC distributes funds donated by the churches, individuals, organizations and grants to those who are financially stressed. We need you! If interested, please call JoAnne 715-425-2294.

Our Neighbors’ Place

Our Neighbors’ Place needs your help! We have just until the end of the year to raise enough money for a building for our homeless shelter. We are currently renting 4 apartments at \$2,600 a month. We realize renting is not cost effective or a good use of precious funds but it has allowed ONP to slowly work it's way up towards the end goal of purchasing possibly a 4-plex. Our apartments are full and we have a waiting list. We are getting close, but not close enough. Please consider making a generous donation so that we can provide room at the inn for families in our community who are in desperate need. Please send your donations to: Our Neighbors' Place, P.O. Box 274, River Falls, WI 54022 Thank you!

Praises

Prayer Group

Reflection

Action

Yes

Effective

Realistic

It’s wonderful to be part of this group. We welcome each of you to join us. As our foundation, we have gotten prayer requests on the internet. In order to be available to more people, we are adding prayer request lists being mailed out. Please supply your current address to the office.

Pastor Chris and I would like to begin a time of being together for idea and information exchange leading to prayer. At **10:00 am each Tuesday**, all folks interested please meet in our Sanctuary. Contact Pastor Chris or Annette Petersen (425-5710) with questions.

Prayer Request Cards

Prayer is one of the great gifts of the Christian life. There is something powerful in both turning your prayers over to God, and knowing that there is a group of people who are together praying for the same thing.

Prayer request cards and a prayer box are on the back sign-up table. Simply complete the sheet and put it in the box. You may choose to have your prayers shared publically in the weekly worship bulletin, or privately simply among those in the Prayer Group. You may be very specific in your prayer details or simply choose to be anonymous. Prayers of thanksgiving, concern, health, justice, are all valued!

YoUthCC Corner

Thank You: Thank you goes out to all the youth who participated in this year's Silent Dessert Auction. We had many delicious items and creativity in the decorating. Way to go! Creativity was also apparent in the purchasing in a couple of the cakes as I watched two cakes be purchased and split after the sale.

Finally a big thank you goes out to all who purchased items from the silent auction. Your generosity is wonderful and it allows our youth to attend activities they wouldn't be able to participate in if it wasn't for your help. THANK YOU!

Bake Sale - December 19: Have a craving for a certain Christmas treat, but don't have time to make it. Come visit the Youth Bake Sale on December 19 held in the fellowship hall. There will be many candies, cookies, bars, and even some jam available to help you celebrate the Christmas season. There will items available that will make great gifts. The bake sale is held between services and after the second service. There will be many yummy goodies available. I have already heard dipped candies and pretzels will be available along with the famous Fuller divinity. Youth please bring your items to the church by 9:30 and preferably already divided, if possible. If you have questions, please contact Deb Hoffman via phone @425-5633 or e-mail @ debhoffman234b@hotmail.com



Poinsettias and Blankets: Again this year, the youth are selling poinsettias and blankets "in honor of" or "in memory of" someone special. The order form for blankets or plants will be available through December 12 on the back table or call the church office. The poinsettias will be displayed at the altar on Christmas Eve and available for pick up after the 11:00 pm Christmas Eve service. A bow or similar type ornament will be placed on the Christmas tree to represent the blanket you donated "in memory or honor of" someone special.

The blankets will be donated to the Church World Service. The cost of either item is \$12.00 and all proceeds go toward the youth funds. If you have any questions, please call Deb Hoffman @ 425-5633.

In the rush of the Christmas Season, don't forget to stop and thank God for the true meaning of Christmas. May God bless you and keep you safe. Deb Hoffman

Important Sunday School Dates

Christmas Musical Wednesday Rehearsal:	Wednesday, December 15, 3:30 to 5:00 PM
Christmas Musical Dress Rehearsal:	Saturday, December 18, 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon
Christmas Musical:	Sunday, December 19, 10:30 AM Worship Service

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

In this holy season, our hearts turn toward Emmanuel, the presence of God with us. As the body of Christ, we are called to reflect that presence in our relationships with one another and in the world. For 108 years the Christmas Fund offering has been a means by which we, as members of the church, live out this mandate.

Take a moment to reflect on the ways your life has been touched by a retired pastor, youth leader, Christian education director, music director, church secretary, custodian... Please honor their ministry in a way that will help folks like them in these challenging times.

Christmas "Thank You" gift checks were sent to about 900 people last year. Twenty of these people were over 100 years old; the oldest was 107. You have the opportunity to be a part of this ministry to the retired clergy & lay employees of the UCC.

To contribute to the Christmas Fund, please use the special envelope in the pew pocket, or just mark "Christmas Fund" on your check. Please remember that your gift will make a difference in someone's life this Christmas.

Growing In Faith

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Honoring Our Past...Shaping Our Future

Last Call For Building Project Financial Commitments

- Our sincere thanks to the 100 households who have offered \$830,020 in financial commitments. When added to \$39,591 in contributions received before the launch of the campaign, we have now raised a grand total of \$869,611 in financial commitments dedicated to the building project.
 - As stated in the initial congregation presentation meetings, in order to be fiscally responsible our goal is to raise 2/3 of the project cost in cash and commitments over the next 3 years.
 - On December 3, Derrick Construction of New Richmond submitted a revised bid for the entire project. The September 28, 2009 estimate of \$2,490,531 has now been revised downward to a new estimate of \$2,386,970. The cost savings of \$103,561 (4.85%) reflects the downturn in the economy and its impact on pricing for labor and materials.
 - With nearly \$870,000 already committed to the project, we are within \$705,000 of the 2/3 funding needed to begin the entire project.
 - On December 31, 2010 we will bring our capital campaign to a close. While financial contributions and commitments received after this date will be welcome and appreciated, we have set December 31st as the official end for our campaign. This will enable us to move forward with our cash flow planning to determine how much of our proposed building project we can afford.
 - **If you need one more reminder that your financial support WILL mean a difference – this is it!**
 - Imagine the potential benefits for our entire congregation, including:
 - ☑ Thanksgiving dinner in a new Fellowship Hall where there is room for everyone “at the table”
 - ☑ Classroom space to accommodate growing numbers of children, youth and adults
 - ☑ Dedicated space for youth ministry (the future of our church)
 - ☑ Expanded and fully accessible restrooms on the main level – more comfort for all!
 - ☑ Fully accessible building with a reliable elevator to travel between all levels
 - ☑ No leaking roof – No flooded basement – Energy efficient windows, heating and cooling
 - Think of the ways you can structure a meaningful financial commitment without a serious sacrifice. For example, a \$2,000 commitment spread over 36-months is less than \$56 per month!
 - ☒ \$56 = a family of four enjoying a meal at a moderately priced restaurant.
 - ☒ \$56 = an evening at the movies, including popcorn, sodas, and gummy bears.
 - ☒ \$56 = two rounds of drinks and hors d’oeuvres at a local watering hole, after a church meeting.
 - For those “waiting to see what happens” we need your tangible support to get started! Thank You!
-
- Larry Bauer, Co-Chair
 - Patti Filkins, Co-Chair
 - Bob Gustafson, Co-Chair
 - Bill Herris, Building Committee Chair
 - Cheryl Lentz, Finance Committee Chair
 - Missy Luedtke, Administrative Coordinator
 - Chris Myers, Pastor
 - Rick Price, Finance Committee Liaison
 - Jean Smith, Moderator

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

STAFF



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

STANDARD PRESORT
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID

PERMIT #53
 RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

December 15, 2010



2010 DECEMBER 2010						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 1 (7th & 8th Grades) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Confirmation Year 3 (9th Grade)	2 Yoga 9-10:00 am First Thursday Fellowship 9:30-10:00 am Bible Study 10-10:30 am	3	4
5 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 11:30 am Advent Workshop Advent Marketplace Open	6 Endowment Grant Meeting 6:30 pm	7 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am	8 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Pre-Confirmation (6th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Church Interns NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	9 Yoga 9-10:00 am Mitten Night 6:30 pm	10	11
12 8:00 am Chancel Choir and Jubilee Ringers 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:00 am Craft/Bake Sale 10:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast Advent Marketplace Open	13	14 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am 2nd Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's Trustees Meeting 6:00 pm Boards & Committees Meetings 6:30 pm Church Council Mtg 7:30 pm	15 3:30 pm Wednesday School 5:00 pm Advent Meal 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Advent Evening Prayer Service 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:00 pm Confirmation Years 1 & 3 (7th, 8th & 9th Grades)	16 Last Yoga 9-10:00 am	17	18 Children's Christmas Program Rehearsal 10:00 am-12:00 noon
19 All Worship Sunday 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 Advent Marketplace Open Christmas Fund Offering Rec'd	20 Endowment Committee Meeting 6:30 pm NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	21 Prayer Group 10:00 am 3rd Tuesday Soup 'n Sandwich 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	22 No Wednesday Activities	23	24 Christmas Eve Church Office Closed at Noon Worship Services at 4:00 pm, 6:00 pm and 11:00 pm	25 Christmas Day
26 9:00 am Worship Service 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am Worship Service 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast Advent Marketplace Opens Endowment Grant Requests Due	27 Church Office Closed	28 Prayer Group 10:00 am Lucile Kitzerow Memorial Service 11:00 am 4th Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	29 No Wednesday Activities	30	31 Church Office Closed	