

# “The Congregator”

First Congregational United Church of Christ - 110 N. Third Street - River Falls, WI

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

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FEBRUARY 15, 2009

## Mid-Week Lenten Services

**Something New:** Part of ministry is to try new things. This year we will try a new thing that is really a very old thing. For centuries Christians have gathered together in the weeks prior to Easter for fellowship and reflection. This year we will do so as well.

The evening will begin with dinner. The meals will be family-friendly. Following dinner, we will move to the sanctuary for worship. The focus of the worship service will be the *Holden Village Evening Prayer* service. It is a lovely, reflective, primarily sung service. The melodies will be new at first for nearly everyone. But as the weeks move on and people become familiar with the service, the music will become as an old, familiar friend. The services will also include scripture and a children's story.

Many people and families at First Congregational are hungry for a connection to the congregation as well as hungry for spiritual sustenance. Hopefully the Mid-Week Lenten Service will help satisfy these cravings. Please make it a point to come.

<b>Schedule &amp; Themes:</b>	3:30 – 5:00	Wednesday School
	5:00 – 6:15	Family Meal (Please make a reservation.)
	5:30 – 6:30	Bell Practice
	6:30 – 7:00	Worship
	7:00 – 7:30	Confirmation
	7:00 – 8:00	Choir Rehearsal

## God Is Still Speaking... Learning To Listen For God

Ash Wednesday, February 25:	Dust and Ashes	Communion Service (6:30 – 7:30 pm) Imposition of Ashes
Wednesday, March 4:	Faithfulness	How can God's people remain faithful in amid challenge? Text: Micah 6:1-8 Story: <i>All the Cats in the World</i> , Sonia Levitin
Wednesday, March 11:	Healing	How do we recognize God's healing? Text: Psalm 30 Story: <i>The Wing</i> , Ray Buckley
Wednesday, March 18:	Loving & Losing Life	Why do we give of ourselves to find meaning? John 12:24-26 Story: <i>The Quiltmaker's Gift</i> , Jeff Brumbeau
Wednesday, March 25:	Taking Risks	Why is it important to be creative and take risks? Matthew 25:14-29 Story: <i>Morgan the Artist</i> , Donald Carrick
Wednesday, April 1:	Service	What does it mean to be great? Luke 22:24-27 Story: <i>The Tower</i> , Richard Paul Evans

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*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.*

## Moderator's Notes ~ Submitted by Jean Smith

Let me introduce myself for those of you who do not know me. My name is Jean Smith and I am the Church Moderator for the next two years. I have been a member at the River Falls UCC since the fall of 1976. My husband, Tom, grew up in this church. We were married here in the summer of 1976. Our three children were baptized and confirmed here and one of them was married in this church. The welcoming spirit of this church is what appealed to me then and that has not changed over the years. I believe that the wonderful support of our members for each other and our strong sense of community has served us well in the past and will take us into the future.

I wanted to start with the following definitions: This is from, **"The Constitution of The First Congregational Church United Church of Christ of River Falls, Wisconsin"**. The Moderator shall serve as chair at all regular and special meetings of the congregation and also serve as chair of the Church Council.

**Duties of the Church Council:** It shall be the duty of the Church Council to coordinate the total program of the church, to observe and study the church program with a view to its improvement, and to submit recommendations regarding the general program of the church to the congregation at the annual meeting or a duly called special meeting.

With these defined positions, I hope to lead the congregation, over the next two years, to the best of my ability. With God's help, your ideas and your suggestions, together we can make a difference in the lives of those that need us the most.

If you should ever have any questions, concerns, ideas for discussion please feel free to email me at [jsmithler@yahoo.com](mailto:jsmithler@yahoo.com) or call me at 715-531-1552 or leave a message at the church office

I will leave you with these words of encouragement that I came across a few days ago.

*The Lord will give you help and strength, For work he bids you do:  
To serve Him from a heart of love, Is all He asks of you. -Fasick*

### TREASURER'S NOTES

Missy Luedtke

Please remember the following when you make purchases for the church.

- All purchases for the church are TAX EXEMPT. If you do not have a tax-exempt form, ask for one from the office.
- Please put a copy of the receipt in my mailbox in the office, attached to a bill submission form. (Blank forms are in my mailbox.) Include proper account to charge to.

Financial Information for January and YTD:

	January	YTD
Income	\$ 69,154.68	\$ 69,154.68
Expenses	\$ 30,897.60	\$ 30,897.60
Net	\$ 38,257.08	\$ 38,257.08

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



### It Takes a Village Concert

The sixth annual "It Takes a Village" concert will be held at Ezekiel Lutheran Church (202 South 2nd Street) at **7:00 pm on Sunday, February 15**. The concert features six River Falls church and community choirs. Each choir will sing two songs and all will join together as a mass choir to perform the final two selections. An update on our community Haiti project will be given. All free will donations go to the Haiti project (checks should be made out to "Food For the Poor"). Refreshments will be served in the Fellowship Hall following the concert.

### Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday begins this year with a Pancake Supper served by the youth of the church from **5:00 until 6:15 pm on February 25**. The Ash Wednesday Worship Service will be at **6:30 pm** in the Sanctuary. The service will include the imposition of ashes on either your head or hand. Please join us as we begin the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday.

The Relay for Life team will have another bake/food/craft sale on **Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup>**. We will be set up in the Fellowship Hall before and after each service.



## Why Ash Wednesday? Why Lent?

Lent will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 25. On that day we will come together for worship. There will be three important foci of the Ash Wednesday service: confession, imposition of ashes, and communion.

**LENT**

Confession is important for Christian people. It is a time to come before God openly and humbly to ask for forgiveness. Often people think that confession is focused on the past. In reality confession is focused on the future. We confess our sin (actions that separate us from God and God's way) so that God is able to offer forgiveness and the possibility of moving into the future with new commitments and new ideas.

In ancient days, people marked themselves with ashes to outwardly express mourning and sorrow. Today people are marked with an ashen cross as a public expression of their commitment to faithful repentance. The words "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return" are a solemn reminder that we are finite creatures whose lives will end. As the author of Psalm 90 reminds us, we need to learn to number our days so we may become wise.

Confession and ashes are somber. They confront us with knowledge about ourselves that we might rather not see, that we would often rather not engage. It is within this context that we celebrate communion, and hear again of God's boundless love and commitment to each one of us. The Eucharistic meal becomes on this day nothing short of life-giving sustenance.

Lent is an important journey. It is a time of individual and communal reflection, repentance, re-examination and recommitment to the way of God. The destination at the end of Lent is well-known: Easter. In order to truly hear the good news of the resurrection, it is necessary to travel through the days and the work of Lent.

Stacy Johnson Myers, Christian Education Coordinator

### Workers Needed

During the Wednesdays in Lent we will be gathering for family meals (March 4, 11, 18, 25, and April 1). We are still in need of volunteers to help serve and clean up. Please consider helping. The work is not hard and it contributes to an important congregational ministry. Call the church office to volunteer or sign the list.

### Pictorial Timeline Update

We have now made our way through 23 of the 32 pictorial timeline images. From the First Sunday in Lent until Palm Sunday, we will focus on one image: "Jesus the Teacher." Each of those Sundays we will explore a different parable. Look carefully at the image, "Jesus the Teacher." You will find symbols that represent several specific parables.

### Third Tuesday Soup n' Bread

We are adding a meal each third Tuesday of the month at St. Bridget Catholic Church. The first one will be **February 17th at 5:00 pm**. It will be a simple meal of a hearty soup and bread. If anyone wishes to volunteer, contact Nancy Parlin 715-246-0438 or [nparlin@frontiernet.net](mailto:nparlin@frontiernet.net)

### Baptism

Have you been baptized? Do you desire to be baptized? In Christian history, the season of Lent has been a time of preparing people for baptism. Again this year, on Easter morning we hope to welcome people into the faith and family of Jesus Christ. Please see Pastor Chris if you desire to have you or your loved one baptized during one of the three Easter Sunday services—7am (sunrise), 9 and 10:30 am.

### New Member Class

Want to know more about our life and ministry at First Congregational? Join us for the Spring New Member Class on **Sunday, March 1 from 11:30 to 1:00 pm**. This class gives new people in our congregation a chance to ask questions, meet church leaders and other newcomers. The class meets in the Fellowship Hall immediately after the 10:30 am worship service. Lunch and childcare are provided. Attending the class is the first step in the membership process. Please use the sign-up sheets to let us know you are coming. Questions? Please see Lu Lueck, in the church office (425-2052).



### Covenanting Service

The Rev. Carol Heckmann invites you to join her as she begins her ministry as chaplain at Oak Meadows Independent and Assisted Living Community in Oakdale, Minnesota. The service will be in the afternoon of **Sunday, March 22**. Please see Pastor Chris for details and directions.

*“Of all the forces that make for a better world, none is so powerful as hope.*

*With hope, one can think, one can work, one can dream. If you have hope, you have everything.”*

This quote was taken from the “*The Changing Tide*,” from Back Bay Mission. The people of Biloxi, MS have high **hopes** for our youth and adults that will make the trip to their homes next month to help rebuild homes still in need of construction from the destruction of Katrina and the poor economic situation in that area.

On **February 25<sup>th</sup>**, the youth and adults going to Back Bay Mission are preparing a **Pancake Supper** to help ease the chaos of your home for an evening. February 25<sup>th</sup> is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Wednesday services through the Lenten Season. In order to ease the rush of preparing supper, feeding the family, getting them to confirmation, or getting yourself to choir, plus attending Ash Wednesday service, come to the church early and have supper, relax with friends, and reflect with less anxiety during the service. **The pancake supper will be served from 5:00 to 6:15 pm.** The menu is pancakes, quiche, fruit, and beverages. A small donation is being asked to cover the cost of your meal and all proceeds will be used to help our youth and the people at Back Bay Mission. Come and enjoy without the hassle of clean up. Please sign up on the sign-up sheet located in the back of the sanctuary to determine how many we are preparing the meal for that night.

Thank you for your support of our youth and their endeavors to better our world and to understand the meaning of mission.

God Bless, Deb Hoffman

### Adult Forum

**February 15: *First Congo Reads—The Shack*, Stacy Johnson Myers—*The Shack*, by William Paul Young**, is the focus of the 2009 First Congo Reads project. The forum will discuss and critique themes and ideas that emerge from the book.

**February 22: *Music in the Church—Part II*, Dr. Sarah Parks**—The music we experience as part of our current worship was greatly influenced by a young, developing America. This forum will examine events from 1400 – today that helped shape the liturgical music and hymnody of our present-day worship.

**March 1 and 8: *The Sacrament of Holy Communion*, Stacy Johnson Myers**—The celebration of the Eucharist is of central importance to the Christians. The forum sessions will explore the theological and liturgical history of the sacrament as well as consider the role of the Eucharist in the life of the First Congregational community.

**March 15, 22, 29: *Bruce Feiler: Walking The Bible*, Dave Hallstrom**—*Walking the Bible* represents Bruce Feiler's journey to key places recorded in the Pentateuch, the first five books in the Hebrew Scriptures. Feiler crosses the Red Sea, climbs Mount Sinai, and walks through the dessert that was home to Sarah and Abraham. The forum will consider how geography affects biblical stories and how ancient stories continue be to alive today.



### Puppet Ministry

Are you ready to ‘lift your arms’ in praise? Then it’s time to join the “Hands of Faith” Puppet Ministry

Team! We’re revving up for another fun session of puppet ministry: **February 18–March 22.** “Hands of Faith” Puppet Ministry Team is looking for adults; middle and high school students who want to try their ‘hand’ in our puppet ministry production of ‘The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares’. So if you are wondering what “Puppet Fever” is all about, join us for rehearsals Wednesdays 7:00–8:00 pm and/or Sundays from 9:00–10:15 am in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday school classroom. Sign-up sheet is located at the back of the sanctuary.

Breaking News!!! The “Hands of Faith” Puppet Ministry Team has been invited to perform at the Bethel Highlands Lutheran Church in Hudson on Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup>. We also invite everyone to watch our performance during the Time With Children on Sunday, March 22 during the 10:30 service.

ATTENTION ADULTS: “Hands of Faith” needs your help. If you have a few spare Wednesdays and/or Sundays to assist us with prop making (no experience necessary) then plan to attend Wednesday, March 18 in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday school room and get details of how you can help. Got questions? Please call Cheryl Solberg (377-1028). I’d love to hear from you!

## New York Immigration Trip

This year's Third Year Confirmands (9<sup>th</sup> graders) visited New York this past week as part of their three-year confirmation experience. The focus of Third-Year Confirmation this year has been immigration. As part of their preparation for the trip they learned to connect modern immigration issues with the stories of the Bible. In fact, one could say that the Bible is an immigration handbook. We identified over 20 immigration stories—from Adam and Eve, to Moses and the Israelites, to Jesus himself.

While in New York City, the Confirmands visited Ellis Island, the Lower Eastside Tenement Museum and worshipped at The Riverside Church, the largest UCC congregation in New York City. Look for posters detailing their trip in the Fellowship Hall soon.



## Back Bay Mission Trip

Sunday March 8 is the commissioning service for the 24 people who are traveling to the UCC Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi. They are leaving on Saturday, March 14 and returning March 21 and will be painting, sheet-rocking and roofing houses still left damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Please come to the Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper on Wednesday, February 25 which supports this ministry. We are hoping to make a special offering to Back Bay Mission as a part of our trip. Please make checks out to the church and note 'Back Bay Mission' on it.

Please remember in your prayers our people participating in this ministry. They are:

Adults: Deb Hoffman, John Querna, Mark Bergland, Sally Bergland, Carol Merriman, Carole Mottaz, Rollie Hall, Glenn Kees, Wendy Hill and Pastor Chris

Youth: Andria Hall, David Querna, Joe Querna, Kelvin Roe, Laurel Bergland, Brad Kessler, Matt Bylander, Spencer Wakefield, Brooke Chaves, Mark Parsons, Holden Ohlsen, Hannah Ohlsen and MacKenzie Merriman

## Summer Camp

Here is something to consider while scheduling your summer agenda. Check out some of the new opportunities at UCC Summer Camps:

- Picture This! - a photography camp for Jr Hi and Sr Hi campers
- Autism Spectrum Family Camp - for families that include a person diagnosed with Autism
- Workcamps and Extreme Camp Makeover Events at Moon Beach and Pilgrim Center
- Women's Feed Your Soul - a self-care event for women in the early spring
- See God in Golf -- golfing in the crisp air of autumn
- Joys of Marriage - a pre-marriage retreat for couples entering into a committed relationship
- Baby Boomer Camp - "because I am over 50, not over the hill!"

You can also check out the website: [ucci.org](http://ucci.org)



## Taizé Service

The next **Taizé Service** will take place **March 8 at 7:00 pm**. Taizé is an alternative form of worship and is meditative in nature. The service is ecumenical and open to all.

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**STAFF**



Chris Myers - Pastor  
 Lu Lueck - Parish Coordinator  
 Missy Luedtke - Office Assistant  
 Stacy Johnson - CE Coordinator  
 Sarah Parks- Music Coordinator  
 Organists - Marsha Pearson,  
 Barb Wall  
 Tim Bylander - Building Supervisor  
 Dave Mountain - Custodian  
 Bob Gustafson - 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**

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 River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

February 15, 2009

2009 FEBRUARY 2009						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
15 8:00 am Chancel Choir <b>9:00 am Worship Service</b> 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship <b>10:30 am Worship Service</b> 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast 7:00 pm It Takes a Village Concert	16 Building and Finance Committees Joint Meeting 6:30 pm	17 Third Tuesday Soup 'n Bread 5:00 pm  Boards and Committees Meetings 6:30 pm  Church Council 7:30 pm	18 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Comma Club 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 1 (7th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Confirmation Year 3 (9th Grade)	19 Journey House Meeting 6:30 pm	20	21
22 All Worship Sunday <b>9:00 am Worship Service</b> 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship <b>10:30 am Worship Service</b> 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast	23 Missionary Education Committee Meeting 6:30 pm  Endowment Grant Requests Due  NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	24 4th Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	25 Pancake Supper Served by the Youth 5:00-6:15 pm  Ash Wednesday Worship Service at 6:30 pm	26	27	28

**4th Tuesday Banquet Coordinator Needed**

As anyone who has attended knows, the banquets are a time of fellowship and food that satisfies both nutritionally and emotionally. Six churches take turns with cooking and clean-up on a 4-month rotation. A coordinator from each church decides on the menu and finds the cooks every 4th month. On two 4th Tuesdays in the 4-month cycle the coordinator finds 6-8 people to clean-up after the meal. Clean-up takes about one hour. One 4th Tuesday in a four month cycle is off. Meanwhile we laugh a lot and eat very well. There is a sense of satisfaction knowing you have served your community. Anyone interested should contact Lu in the church office 425-2052.

**Summer Dates**

Please keep the following dates in mind when scheduling summer activities:

**Vacation Bible School  
 August 3 - 6, 2009**

**The Musical  
 June 22 - 25, 2009**