



FIRST

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

God is still speaking,

110 N. Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022
715-425-2052 — www.firstchurchrf.org
Rev. Chris Myers: chris@firstchurchrf.org
Office email: office@firstchurchrf.org

JANUARY 1, 2012

Pastor's Corner

Flying can be frustrating. Between delays at airports, security hassles, packed planes and extra fees, my new mantra for flying is 'less is more.' Whenever I fly, I try to travel with only carry-on luggage in an attempt to simplify the journey.

The same can be true at Christmas time. It is busy and there are many demands placed upon us by ourselves and others. So how can we simplify our lives this Christmas season? Perhaps we should take a clue from the biblical story of that first Christmas.

1. 'They bowed down and worshipped him.' When the magi arrived at the place the Christ child lay, they worshipped. Christmas begins and ends with worship.
2. 'They opened their treasures.' God's gifts do not fall down out of the sky, rather they are released through God's people. God creates miracles through the gifts you and I hold in our hands. Miracles happen when we release our treasures to help accomplish God's work being done in the world.
3. 'They returned to their country by a different road.' Belief is the easy part, the harder part is changing patterns and routines. As disciples who follow Jesus, his birth enables us to live life differently. Not just in heaven, but also here on earth, the place he taught and healed, preached and welcomed.

Christmas Day may be past, but the Christmas season continues to Epiphany and beyond. May the story of our Savior's birth continue to guide you in your everyday living.

Pastor Chris

Cribbage Anyone?

Anyone interested in playing cribbage 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.

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.

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

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.

Second 8-Part Sermon Series: Things Christians DO Need to Believe

Jesus' Identity: Who is Jesus? (preview preached Nov 20)

1. Jesus' Priority: What Matters Most? (Jan 8)
2. Jesus' Grace: Am I Accepted? (Jan 15)
3. Jesus' Work: Where is God? (Jan 22)
4. Jesus' Example: What Brings Fulfillment? (Jan 29)
5. Jesus' Death: What About Suffering? (Feb 5)
6. Jesus Resurrection: Is There Any Hope? (Feb 12)
7. Jesus' Legacy: Is the Church Still Relevant? (Feb 19)
8. Jesus Promise: Who is the Holy Spirit? (Feb 26)

Post Script: Jesus Vision: What is God's Dream for the World (Mar 4)

(The first 8-part Series: 8 Things Christians Don't Need to Believe
was preached this past fall.)

TREASURER'S NOTE\$

Missy Luedtke

	<u>Dec 18, 2011</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
Budget Income	\$ 10,946.00	\$ 329,445.96
Budget Requirements	\$ 6,837.65	\$ 348,720.15

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.

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!

2012 Pledge?

Do we have your 2002 pledge? If not please return your pledge sheet to the church office, via the mail or in the Sunday morning offering plate. Please have them turned in by January 15.



**SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, February 12, 2012, 1:00-4:00 pm
OPEN HOUSE CELEBRATION OF OUR NEW ADDITION**

Food, Beverages, Music, Puppets, Tours and Fellowship
Come and bring friends and family!

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.



From the Church Staff,

A very humble thank you for all the cards and

gifts you have given us. We are very grateful for your generosity. We have tried to thank you in person but sometimes items simply appear on our desks. Please know your kindness is appreciated.

Thanks to....

- The Discipleship Committee members who served a wonderful breakfast to over 120 people.
- All the volunteers who helped at the Children’s Christmas Program and to our director Peggy Krasin.
- The 25 volunteers who descended upon the church to help us unload 300 new chairs for our Fellowship Hall. The chairs were all unloaded, unwrapped and moved into place in 90 minutes.
- Those who provide Wednesday School snacks week after week

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).

Adult Forum

December 25 & January 1—No Forum

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?

First Congregational Reads

“First Congregational Reads” is now a well-established tradition. This year’s selection is *Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*, by Bob Bell. Copies will be available in the church office for \$17.00.

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.



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

1 LB decaf \$12.00

5 LB regular \$51.25

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.

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.

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.

*“If patience is worth anything, it must endure to the end of time.
And a living faith will last in the midst of the blackest storm.”*

~ Mohandas Gandhi

Remembering the Christmas Musical

Many thanks to the children who provided a wonderful story for our Advent worship with the production of *Chimes in the Night*. The musical was wonderful. A tremendous thank you to Judith Permann who so expertly accompanies and supports the children's singing.



Puppet Ministry

The 'Puppet Force' Ministry Group needs your strong "arms" [2nd grade & up, middle/high school, & adults] for an upcoming performance in February. Rehearsal date/times for this short-term commitment are to be determined. 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!

Important Dates

Sunday School Resumes:
January 8, 2012

Wednesday School Resumes
January 11, 2012

YoUthCC Corner

Poinsettias/Blankets: Thank you to all who purchased poinsettias and blankets this year. Our altar will be enhanced with 12 beautiful plants to celebrate the Christmas Eve services. Please remember to pick up your plants on Christmas Eve or soon after. Any questions regarding the poinsettias/blankets, please contact Deb Hoffman @ 425-5633.

Christmas Bake Sale: The youth had many yummy items for sale at this year's Christmas bake sale. Thanks to all the bakery donations, purchases, and cash donations. The youth made \$208 at this year's sale.

Thank you all who so generously support our youth. Have a blessed Christmas.
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.

**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

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

110 N. Third Street
 River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

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 U.S. POSTAGE PAID

PERMIT #53
 RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

January 1, 2012



2012 JANUARY 2012						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 New Year's Day Communion Sunday 10:00 am Worship Service 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast	2	3 Prayer Group 10:00 am Endowment Board Meeting 6:30 pm	4 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 2 (8th & 9th Grades) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 9:00 pm Worship Service on Channel 16	5 1st Thursday Bible Study 9:30 am Worship Service on Chnl 16 12:00 pm	6	7
8 8:00 am Chancel Choir 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:00 am NYC Trip Meeting 10:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast 11:30 am Inquirer's Class	9 Mission Education Mtg 6:30 pm 1st Cribbage Night at the Church 7:00 pm	10 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am 2nd Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	11 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Pre-Confirmation (6th Gr) 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 1 (7th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Church Interns 9:00 pm Worship Service on Channel 16	12 Yoga 9-10:00 am Worship Service on Chnl 16 12:00 pm	13	14
15 8:00 am Jubilee Ringers 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 ANNUAL REPORTS DUE	16	17 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am 3rd Tuesday 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's Trustees Mtg 6:00 pm Boards and Committee Meetings 6:30 pm Church Council Meeting 7:30 pm	18 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 2 (8th & 9th Grades) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 9:00 pm Worship Service on Channel 16	19 Yoga 9-10:00 am Worship Service on Chnl 16 12:00 pm	20	21 Katie Fuller Ecclesiastical Council 11:00 am
22 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— New Members Received 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast 3:00 pm Katie Fuller Ordination	23	24 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am 4th Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	25 3:30 pm Wednesday School 5:45 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Pre-Confirmation (6th Gr) 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 1 (7th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 9:00 pm Worship Service on Chnl 16 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	26 Yoga 9-10:00 am Worship Service on Chnl 16 12:00 pm	27	28
29 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	30	31 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am				