

"The Congregator"

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

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

Rev. Chris Myers: chris@firstchurchrf.org - Office email: office@firstchurchrf.org

JANUARY 15, 2009

Pastor's Corner

For the past 16 weeks we have been steadily working our way through some of the most important stories of the Bible. Starting at Christmas we have now moved from the Old to the New Testament. This also means that we have started talking about Jesus.

For many of us, we have been hearing about Jesus for a long time. We have learned the stories about him in Sunday School, Confirmation and worship. We have learned about him from the songs we sing in church. Even our culture seems to be telling us about Jesus lately.

This being said there seems to be some confusion about what it means to be 'like' Jesus. We may sing 'Lord I want to be like Jesus in my heart,' but just what does that mean? Does that mean we are called to be twins, mirror images of Jesus?

I find it helpful to remember that Jesus didn't command us to 'be like me,' as if we were supposed to be Jesus' modern day twin. Instead he said 'follow me.' Follow me as you are and I will take you to places you never knew existed. Follow me and I will enable you to be and do more than you are able to be and do on your own. Follow me and I will surround you with people and experiences that will uplift and challenge you, help you to grow and heal.

Follow me as we continue our exploration of 30 of the core Biblical stories of our faith.

Join us on the journey.

In Christ, Chris Myers, Pastor

Youth Winter Retreat

There are a precious few open spots on the Winter Retreat to the Kalahari Waterpark in the Wisconsin Dells. We leave on Friday, January 23 and return on Saturday, January 24th. Cost is \$50 per person. Please see Pastor Chris for details.

Please remember to bring a \$1 or a can of soup as our young people receive the annual Souper Bowl offering on Super Bowl Sunday, **February 1.**



Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be **Sunday, February 1 after the 10:30 am** worship service. Agenda items include:

- ~ Electing new officers and committee members
- ~ Passing of the 2009 budget
- ~ Reports from the Building and Finance Committees

Lunch will be served to those who have used the sign-up sheets. Childcare is provided.

Copies of the reports will be out Sunday, January 18 and finances will be out Sunday, January 25.

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.

Committees for 2009

The Nominating Committee is soliciting your help in filling the slate of committee members for 2009. We have filled many vacancies but the following ministry teams are still in need of your attention. A description of each committee is posted outside the office. Please contact our Moderator, Bob Gustafson (bagustafson@sbcglobal.net -tel: 425-2516 or the Vice-Moderator, Jean Smith (jsmithler@yahoo.com -tel: 531-1552) if interested.

Christian Education	1 member	3 year term	to join a 9 person team
Music	1 member	3 year term	to join a 6 member team

TREASURER'S NOTE\$

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. EFFECTIVE JAN. 1, 2007, THERE WILL NOT BE ANY REIMBURSEMENT FOR SALES TAX.
- 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 December and YTD:

	December	YTD
Income	\$ 37,624.45	\$ 316,341.87
Expenses	\$ 41,168.83	\$ 318,666.66
Net	\$ -3,544.38	\$ -2,324.79

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

First Congo Reads

The First Congo Reads selection is *The Shack* by William Paul Young. *The Shack* has been at the top of the New York Times reading list. It is a work of "theological fiction" – it is not meant to be orthodox theology. It is provocative, challenging, and will provide plenty of room for exploring images and doctrines of God. Copies of the book are available in the church office for \$9.00. Please consider reading the book. The book will be discussed in the Adult Forum on February 15, 2009.



Taizé Service

The next **Taizé Service** will take place **February 8 at 7:00 pm**. Taizé is an alternative form of worship and is meditative in nature. It utilizes contemplative prayer, spiritual readings, plainsongs and periods of silence in a peaceful candlelight setting. The service is ecumenical and open to all.

Relay for Life Bake Sale

The Relay for Life team is having a bake sale on **Sunday, January 25**. Anyone can support our team when they purchase some goodies and/or donate something to sell. Any questions, please call Marie Roe at 381-1215. River Falls Relay for Life will be March 27-28 at the River Falls High School.

Temple Visit

Ever wondered what a Jewish worship service might look like? On **Friday, February 13th** all three confirmation classes and any interested adults are welcome to join us as we worship at Temple of Aaron Synagogue in St. Paul.

The service will be in the evening and we will car pool and use the church van to get there. Before worship we will tour the temple and have a question and answer time. Please use the sign-up sheet if interested or see Pastor Chris for details.

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 Lueck in the church office 425-2052.

Keeping Baptismal Promises

When Sunday School is back in session for the new year, our students will consider baptism. They will start by hearing the story of Jesus' baptism by John in the River Jordan. In Mark's Gospel, his story of Jesus' life begins not with Jesus' birth but with his baptism. Baptism was important to Jesus.

Baptism is also important for us today. Baptism is not akin to a magical charm. Baptism marks the entrance of a person into the life of the church. Often, but not always, infants are brought to the font for baptism. This act of bringing a child to the church for baptism reveals profound intentions on the part of parents and sponsors that the child will be brought up in the church. Bringing up children in the church means much more than bringing them to church and Sunday School. Bringing up children in the church means passing on the church's story, and announcing God's everlasting love, commitment and offer of acceptance.

When children are baptized at First Congregational Church, they are given a book, *Daddy Promises* by Kerry Arquette, and a letter. The book is a tender account of a parent promising to pass on Bible stories, offer forgiveness, and become a vehicle for recognizing God's love. A particularly poignant passage is: "I will teach you how to talk to God and I will teach you to listen so you can hear when God talks to you." It is a powerful story.

The letter that accompanies the book includes the following paragraph: "The people of First Congregational Church are well aware that bringing up children in the Christian faith is an enormous job. Our commitment to your family is that you will not have to do it alone. Our congregation is here to work with you. We will offer educational programs, fellowship opportunities, and faithful worship to feed and nurture you and your child as she/he grows in faith and years."

This is why faithful participation in and support of Sunday School and Wednesday School and VBS and Confirmation are important. They represent one critical way of keeping baptismal promises.

Stacy Johnson Myers, Christian Education Coordinator

Adult Forum

January 18: *Issues in Diversity*, Mayor Don Richards and Members of the River Falls Diversity Committee—What do inclusion and diversity mean for our church, our community and our families? Members of the River Falls Diversity Committee will discuss their proposals and explain plans for River Falls Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration on January 19, 2009.

January 25: *Music in the Church—Part I*, Dr. Sarah Parks—Church music has a long, varied and interesting history. Sarah Parks, Associate Professor of Music at UWRF and First Congregational's Music Coordinator, will lead a discussion of the development of European sacred music from 900-1400 CE.

February 1: *Growing Spirit: An Exercise and Reflection*, Barry Butenhoff—Adult Forum participants will ponder the meaning behind "Spirit" and individual experiences of spirituality. Included in the discussion will be a portion of Louise Hay's CD, *101 Power Thoughts*.

February 8: *Religion and the Founding of the Nation*, Alan Tuchtenhagen—the role of religion and individual religious beliefs has been a part of the American public debate since the first Europeans settled in America. This session will look at the relationship between religion and politics prior to, and immediately after, the Revolutionary War -- the time of the Nation's founding.

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.

Musical Anyone?

We are interested in getting together a group of people from First Congregational to produce "Godspell", a wonderful musical that tells the story of Jesus' ministry. Performers would be an intergenerational group of adults and teens.

As with every performance, time and work is involved but we also anticipate a great deal of fun and community building.

If you would like more information about participating in Godspell, please sign the list on the sign-up table, call the church office, or speak to Sarah Parks or Stacy Myers. PLEASE consider participating. It would be a great adventure!

**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

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 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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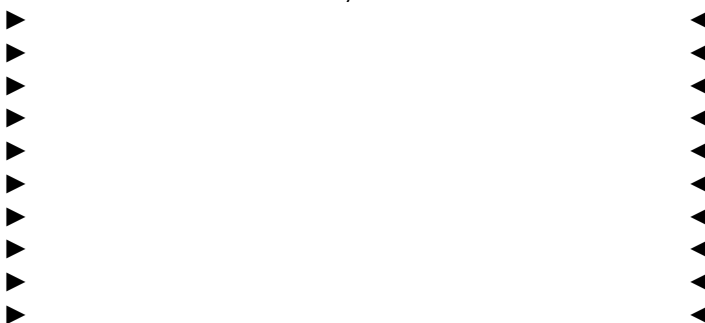
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

January 15, 2009



2009 JANUARY 2009						
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 7:00 pm Taizé Service	12	13 2nd Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	14 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 2 (8th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	15	16	17
18 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	19 Building Committee Meeting 6:30 pm	20 Boards and Committees Meeting 6:30 pm Church Council Meeting 7:30 pm	21 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 1 (7th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Confirmation Year 3 (9th Grade)	22 Finance Committee Meeting 6:30 pm	23 Youth Winter Retreat to Wisconsin Dells →	24
25 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 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	26 Journey House Meeting 6:30 pm	27 4th Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	28 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 2 (8th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	29	30	31

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

Remember: We need kids and adults available for these important weeks!

Volunteers Needed

Your willingness to "do unto others" can be satisfied if you call Interfaith Volunteers to offer to deliver a meal to someone's home once a week, to befriend, or to scrub a kitchen floor once a month. For information on how to keep an individual over age 60 in their own home, contact Nancy, Interfaith Volunteer Program, at 715-381-4360 or email her at nancysa@co.saint-wi.us