

“The Congregator”

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

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

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JANUARY 15, 2010

Pastor's Corner

Why do we do that?

Many of you have noticed that we use a variety of creeds and statements of faith in our worship service. Some are traditional while others are contemporary. Some talk about the Christian faith in familiar ways, while others bring new light and perspective to the faith. There is a reason for this: The Christian faith is bigger than one creed or statement of faith.

The original purpose of creeds was to give people a language to express their faith. Who is God? What does God call us to do and be? Who is Jesus? What was so significant about his life and ministry, death and resurrection? Creeds and statements of faith are used to give us a vocabulary to express something that is beyond words, namely our faith in the God revealed to us in Jesus.

Though our denomination claims the faith of the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds, creeds in general have been used to divide people. Rather than being testimonies of the Christian faith they have been used as tests to decide who is in and who is out. When the four partner denominations merged in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ, they chose, wisely I believe, to develop a Statement of Faith rather than a creed. We still use that Statement of Faith today in worship. It is part of about 10 that we regularly use in our worship. Together they give us words to articulate what we believe as a people. They provide images of how Christ wants us to live. And they help guide us as individuals and as a congregation as we strive to live as Christian men and women.

A display of each of these is on the wall outside the kitchen as you enter the Fellowship Hall. Which one is your favorite?

- Eastern Mennonite Seminary Statement of Faith
- Indonesian Church Statement of Faith
- African Creed
- World Council of Churches Statement of Faith
- South African Statement of Faith
- Apostle's Creed
- Statement of Faith of United Church of Canada
- Nicene Creed
- Iona Statement of Faith
- Church of New Zealand Statement of Faith

Annual Meeting

The Annual Congregational Meeting has been set for **Sunday, February 7, 2010** after the second service. A light lunch is served and childcare is provided. Please make a reservation.

Committee chairs will need to have their annual reports to Lu Lueck **by Monday, January 18, 2010**. Please email them to her at lu@firstchurchr.org.

Habitat Build

First Congregational Church will be having a Habitat build in New Richmond on **January 30, 2010**. The first twelve people to sign up will be able to help build the house for a well deserving homeowner. Please sign up on the back table in the sanctuary or call Carol Merriman for more information 426-6680.

Want to know more about our denomination, the United Church of Christ? Come to the UCC Class on Friday, February 12. See details on page 3.

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.

First Congregational Reads, 2010

The 2010 First Congo Reads selection is *Conquering Fear: Living Boldly in an Uncertain World*, by Harold S. Kushner. We will discuss the book on February 28, 2010 during the Adult Forum. The book is available in the church office for \$17.00.

Lenten Family Meal Workers Needed

During the Wednesdays in Lent we will be gathering for family meals (February 17, 24, March 3, 10, 17, and 24). We are in need of volunteers to cook, 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.

TREASURER'S NOTES

Missy Luedtke

Financial Information for December and YTD:

	<u>December</u>	<u>2009 YTD</u>
Income	\$ 37,468.85	\$ 320,512.74
Expenses	\$ 34,438.97	\$ 318,537.41
Net	\$ 3,029.88	\$ 1,975.33

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

We Did It!

Thank you for your faithful giving in 2009. In a tumultuous economic year, your faithful giving enabled us to end the year with a slight surplus. Thank you to everyone who pledged and even gave above their pledged amount.

Don't forget to check out the church website:

firstchurchrf.org

It is updated frequently, so check back often!



Christmas Thanks

We have tried to thank everyone by name for all the beautiful cards and gifts we have received as church staff. Some of the gifts were given anonymously so we write this thank you to all of you for such kindness shown. Know that they are appreciated.
-The Church Staff



We are "crying out" for nursery attendants! We have Lacie Gordon and Jennifer Niemeyer that are donating their time but we need two more people so each person would only have to do one Sunday a month. Please let me know if you would be interested. Thank you, Lu

Coffee Fellowship

We are in need of Coffee Fellowship volunteers. Please sign up on the back table. Thank you!

Update

The Finance Committee met on January 12 and are busy planning the next steps for the Capital Campaign. More to follow at the Annual Meeting.

UCC History and Polity Course

You are invited to attend a workshop about the history and organization of the UCC. The workshop will be led by Dr. Martha Baumer, former professor at Eden Theological Seminary, from **9:00 to 3:00 on Friday, February 12, 2010**, and will include a luncheon. The cost of the day is \$10.00 per person. This is an excellent Adult Education opportunity. Please register by calling the church office or signing the list on the sign up table.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent. It is a time to remember who we are and whose we are. We do this in worship by receiving the ashes of our burnt palms on our heads or hands. Ash Wednesday is **February 17** and all Confirmands and their parents should be present. The Pre-confirmation class will be making and serving a pancake supper that evening from 5 until 6:15pm. Worship is at 6:30. Please join us.



COFFEE MATTERS

The *Cloudforest coffee* offered for sale in the church lobby is grown by farmers in the central highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. They are some of the poorest people in this hemisphere. A reliable market for their coffee at *Fair Trade* prices is of extreme importance to them. It may even make the difference between staying in their village or deciding to make the long and dangerous trip to “El Norte” in the hopes of finding work as an illegal immigrant. If you drink coffee please consider making this excellent, **organic, shade grown** coffee your coffee of choice. Decaf coffee is available upon request, as is coffee in 5 lb. packages which sell for about \$1 less per pound.

Dead Sea Scrolls Trip

A traveling exhibit of the famed Dead Sea Scrolls is coming to the Science Museum of Minnesota this spring. The church has reserved 30 spots for **Tuesday, April 13, 2010**. We will leave the church at 10am, have a bite to eat, enter the exhibit at noon. Our time at the museum should end around 2pm and we will return to the church around 3pm. The cost is \$20 and includes admission to the museum, exhibit and an audio guide. We must have payment when you sign up for the trip. We will take the church van and need others to drive. Please see Pastor Chris for more info.

For Your 2010 Calendar

As you fill in dates on your 2010 calendar add this event:

January 22 from 9:30-11:30 am—Feed My Starving Children trip to Eagan

They have room for 30 people and will leave the church by 8:30 am, returning after fun and fellowship over lunch on the way home.

This trip is our response to our country's Day of Volunteerism/Martin Luther King Day.

Sign up and join us. It's fun, it's easy and it will warm your heart.



Learning About Sacraments

Over the next weeks, Sunday School students are studying the sacraments and the Lord's Prayer. Since the time of the Reformation, Protestant churches have recognized two sacraments: The Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Each of these sacraments takes place within the context of the liturgy, the classic pattern of worship dating to the days of the apostles. And while there are many expressions of the liturgy and the traditions surrounding the celebration of the sacraments, there is a commonality among all those who baptize and share bread and cup.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are recognized as sacraments because Christ commanded us to do them. Matthew tells us that Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Paul recalls Jesus' final meal and reminded us that Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (I Corinthians 11:23-26). These are very clear, deliberate statements about Jesus' expectations for the church. This expectation, however, is not a cumbersome burden to bear. Participating in the sacraments is a gift that we have the opportunity to receive from God.

It is ultimately impossible to fully define or understand the sacraments. The sacraments embody and proclaim the essence of the church's faith centered in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Celebration of the sacraments within the gathered community presents the possibility of drawing near to and participating in God's purposes. Within the sacraments are themes of forgiveness, reconciliation, community, new life coming from old life, repentance, and steadfast promises about a future within God's abiding love and care.

Sacraments combine a promise and a symbol. In baptism water is the symbol because John used it in Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan. In the Lord's Supper bread and wine are the symbols because Jesus gave them to his disciples at his final meal. The promise at baptism is entrance and full participation in the church and the forgiveness of sins. The promise at the Lord's Supper is that Jesus is present, binding individuals to him, and again offering the possibility of forgiveness.

The children of our Sunday School will need to think about and talk about and experience the sacraments throughout their lifetimes as they seek to find meaning and sustenance within them for the life of faith.

Stacy Johnson Myers
Christian Education Coordinator

Adult Forum

January 17, 24: *Cash Positive, Carbon Negative, and Energy Independence*, Dr. Kelly Cain—Dr. Cain is a professor of Environmental Science at UWRF and the director of the St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Community Development. He will discuss the need for and means to achieve a national energy policy that is cash positive, carbon negative, and energy independent.

January 31: *God's Creation and the Realm of Mystery*, Dr. Lou Greub—Despite advanced, systematic, scientific thought, mystery abounds for God's people. Lou Greub, First Congregational member and retired agronomist from UWRF will consider the history and interpretation of crop circles, unusual physical patterns discovered in farm fields in several places across the world.

February 7: *The Thought of Walter Brueggemann: The Absence of God—Texts that Refuse to Be Explained Away*, Stacy Johnson Myers—The forum will consider the work of Walter Brueggemann, prominent Old Testament scholar, who ponders the importance of struggling with difficult biblical texts, particularly those related to God's absence.

YoUthCC Corner

Bake Sale:

THANK YOU very much to all who purchased or donated toward the youth annual Christmas bake sale. The kids earned over \$220 in bake good purchases and donations. There were many tempting cookies and candies which made it really hard to pick one thing. Thank you all who participated in the baking and donating toward the bake sale. Thanks also to the Adam Truesdill, McKenzie Merriman, and the Swanson and Gedatus families for helping with the selling at the bake sale.

Poinsettias and Blankets:

THANK YOU also to all of you who purchased blankets and poinsettias. Through your donations our youth will be donating 126 blankets to Church World Services. There were also 25 poinsettias purchased in honor of or in memory of a special friend or loved one. After the poinsettias were displayed beautifully for the Christmas Eve services, fifteen plants were donated to shut-ins and other families within our community. Thank you to the Solberg family for setting up the poinsettia display.

Some Upcoming Events for 2010:

- Confirmation Retreat—February 5-7
- Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper—February 17 - Pre-Confirmation kids will prepare and serve
- Easter lily sale
- Relay for Life
- Easter Breakfast—April 4 - Confirmation kids will prepare and service the breakfast
- The start of a Post Confirmation Program - dates to be determined

Thank you to all who so generously support our youth. Your kindness is sincerely appreciated.
God Bless, Deb Hoffman

P.S. Thank you to all for the prayers and well wishes for my Dad. He is doing well after his surgeries and is looking forward to returning to a normal schedule.

Confirmation Retreat

The Confirmation Retreat for 8th and 9th graders will be an Urban Immersion Service Retreat to Minneapolis, **February 5-7, 2010**. This is always a highlight of the confirmation experience. Forms will be out soon. Please make sure these dates are on your calendars.



From Broken Down Bikes to Rebuilt Bikes

Tim Bylander has taken over for Cecil Bjork the task of rebuilding bicycles to give away to kids and adults in our community. He is in need of used bikes or parts to repair or put together "new bikes". If you have used or parts of old bikes you would like to donate, please contact Tim at (715) 425-7437. Thank you for your help.

Weekly Email

Do we have your current email address? The "Weekly Word" is a weekly email sent out on Thursdays that highlights upcoming church activities.

Please send the church office your updated email address at office@firstchurchrf.org.

Retreated from Winter

Thanks to our volunteers who led our 6th and 7th graders on a 24 hour retreat from Winter at a Water Park in Eau Claire. We had a blast on the water slides and lazy river. We played Apples to Apples until late in the evening and even got to test our driving skills on go-carts. Thanks to Joel Larsen, Diana Villeneuve and Pastor Chris who chaperoned.

Got Choir?

Chancel Choir is the place for you! Our Chancel Choir at First Congregational is open to anyone post-confirmation age and up. The choir rehearses every Wednesday from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. and performs two times per month. No previous experience is necessary, and the choir is always looking for more members of any voice part. Contact Scott Perau for more details.

Summer Musical

Did you enjoy Godspell last summer? Once again our church is planning on performing a musical this summer. We will need many members in order to make this a success. Whether you want to be on center stage singing a solo or a part of the chorus, we will find a place for anybody that wants to be a part of this production.

If interested, please sign up on Scott's door and/or attend an **Informational Meeting on January 31st after the second service**. Contact Scott Perau with any questions or concerns.



YES WE ARE!!! Are you ready to begin your 2010 New Year's resolution to get in shape? If so, why not begin by building up your arm strength!! Join the 'Hands Of Faith' puppet ministry group and not

only will you strengthen your arms but also your spiritual self. No paperwork to fill out, no registration fees, and no monthly fees to participate!! Fellowship, fun, laughs, and strong arms guaranteed.

Meetings begin **Wednesday, January 20th from 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm in the 5th grade Sunday school classroom**. The group will perform Sunday, February 7th - "Souper Bowl Sunday" during 'Time With Children'. Continued participation optional but you'll have so much fun you'll absolutely want to continue. Sign up sheet available on back table. For more information, contact Cheryl Solberg at 377-1028.

The 'Faithful Hands' youth puppet ministry group will also practice **today Sunday, January 10th from 9:00 am - 10:00 am**. All children 2nd grade & older are encouraged to participate. Come join us in the 5th grade Sunday school classroom and find out what "Puppet Fever" is all about!!

New to Church? Come to the Inquirer's Class



If you would like to know more about the life and ministry of our church, please register to attend the fall Inquirer's Class on **Sunday, March 7**.

At this 90-minute gathering you will meet church leaders, other newcomers and more about the church's life and ministry. Lunch and childcare are included. Please use the sign-up sheet to register your attendance or contact Lu Lueck in the church office.

After completing this class, those who wish to join the church will be received into membership on Sunday, March 28 at the 10:30 am worship service.

Missionary Update

Below is an email update from our Healthcare Missionary, the Rev. Barb De Souza. Barb is a member of our congregation who runs a healthcare, physical therapy and dental clinic in the slums of Rio de Janeiro.



Since our August newsletter, an important thing has happened to our program which we would like to share with you now.

At last, victory! The person in charge of the city contracts came to the clinic on Friday to deliver our Association of Community Health Educator's new two-year contract to me personally. I read it with so much satisfaction for finally, after more than 4 years of hoping, our contract includes our physical therapy program with our two physical therapists. The girls crowded into the administration room to see me sign it. We felt that this victory needed to be shared with you, our faithful partners.

Of course, there are also sacrifices. We were cut 20% in our administration allowance which will cause expense difficulties as we have 3 buildings to maintain. We also lost our social worker for this function was cut from the Family Health Program. Not only will this be a loss personally for she has worked for me for 10 years, but it also means that we will have to struggle to keep our important children's program going for she was the coordinator. We were also cut the few funds we had to support it. We lost our second dentist too which had been a recent and important addition to our program.

But we are so happy to finally, after seven months of anxiety, have our contract renewed. We know because of the cuts and the insecurity of health supplies, that we will have problems ahead of us, but we have meet challenges before and succeeded.

Blessings,
Barb and Gus

PS Above is a picture of the physical therapists, myself and some of the workers (do you recognize me?)

**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

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PASTOR'S HOME PHONE NUMBER

Chris Myers 715-426-2075
 chris@firstchurchrf.org

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

January 15, 2010

2010 JANUARY 2010						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
10 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 11:30 am 3rd Year Confirmands Mtg—Boston Trip NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	11 Kettle Bells 5:00 pm	12 2nd Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	13 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Pre-Confirmation (6th & 7th Grades) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	14	15	16
17 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	18 Annual Reports Due to Lu in the Church Office Kettle Bells 5:00 pm	19 3rd Tuesday Soup 'n Sandwich 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's Boards and Committees Meetings 6:30 pm Church Council Meeting 7:30 pm	20 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 2 (8th Grade) 6:30 pm Puppet Ministry 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Confirmation Year 3 (9th Grade)	21	22 Feed My Starving Children Work Shift 9:30 am-11:30 am	23
24 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	25 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Kettle Bells 5:00 pm	26 4th Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	27 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Pre-Confirmation (6th & 7th Grades) 6:30 pm Puppet Ministry 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	28	29	30 Habitat Build in New Richmond
31 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						

Interfaith Volunteers Needed

Substitute drivers are needed through mid-March for the River Falls home delivered meals program Monday through Friday at 11:00 am. Mileage is paid and the route lasts about 1 hour. Light housekeeping and companionship requests are available. To inquire, contact Nancy or Rhonda at 715-381-4360 or email nancysa@co.saint-croix.wi.us