



# FIRST

## CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

*God is still speaking,*

110 N. Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022  
715-425-2052 — [www.firstchurchrf.org](http://www.firstchurchrf.org)  
Rev. Chris Myers: [chris@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:chris@firstchurchrf.org)  
Office email: [office@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:office@firstchurchrf.org)  
JANUARY 15, 2012

### Pastor's Corner

On Sunday, February 5 we meet for our 2011 Annual Meeting. In addition to our normal business of receiving reports from committees and electing officers, there is some important new business to accomplish. At this year's Annual Meeting we will hear updates on the new building at it's financing. We will vote on some constitutional changes about leadership and when they begin and end terms. We will also approve a budget for 2012.

It is no secret that we had a difficult budget year, at least with the church's General Fund. I am thrilled to tell you that due to much prayer, great faith, and the hard work of many, we made our budget for 2011. Total expenses were \$357,279.69 and total income was \$357,641.99 which left us with a very modest surplus of \$362.30. This means that all our obligations for mission giving, staff salaries, building and program costs were covered. In order for this to happen, I know many of you made sacrificial offerings above and beyond your intended giving. Thank you.

One of the things I have learned through this process is that we can no longer afford to pass deficit budgets. It is not fair to our treasurer who must decide which bills to pay and which to delay. It is not fair to our committees and programs who have to forgo purchases because although there is money allotted in the budget, there is no money in the checking account. I strongly hope we will pass a balanced this year.

The only way we can do this is by receiving your pledge. Much of our financial problems this year came in trying to guess anticipated giving. A pledge is not a contract, it can certainly be changed due to a change in one's personal economic conditions. A pledge is simply one's intention of how much is to be given to what God is doing through this congregation in 2012.

Put simply everyone in the church can pledge. Pledges come in many different sizes. One of our smallest pledges this year came from a college student, who though he is far away, continues to pledge \$5 a month to God's work in and through this congregation. Our largest contribution comes from a family who tithes 50% of their income and who week every year to increase that amount. My bet is that most of us find ourselves between these two extremes.

This year more than ever, every single pledge will make a difference. If you have not yet completed your pledge, please do so today. As always, thank you for your generous support of this church and it's mission.

Pastor Chris

### 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 **Sun, Jan 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 **Sat, Jan 21 at 11:00 am**, also at First Congregational. Please mark your calendars so you can be a part of this special event.

### 2012 Pledge?

Do we have your 2012 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.

*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 NOTES

Missy Luedtke

	<u>Dec. 31, 2011</u>
Budget Income	\$ 357,641.99
Budget Requirements	<u>357,279.69</u>
Net Income	<u>\$ 362.30</u>
	<u>Jan. 8, 2012</u>
Budget Income	<u>\$ 15,889.81</u>

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

### Annual Meeting

The 2011 Annual Meeting will be held on **Sunday, February 5** following the 10:30 am worship service in the Fellowship Hall. Lunch will be served (please make a reservation) and childcare provided. In addition to the normal business of electing officers and approving budgets, there will also be updates on the new building and it's financing. There will also be a proposal from the Church Council for some constitutional changes about church leadership. Please mark the date on your calendars and sign up for the meal.

**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.

### Annual Reports are Due

**I need your Annual Reports no later than January 15<sup>th</sup>.**

I would prefer them electronically, but if that is not possible, I will accept a hard copy. Thank you. Lu



## Coming Soon...

### OPEN HOUSE CELEBRATION OF OUR NEW ADDITION

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

## River Falls Church Choirs Present 9<sup>th</sup> Annual "It Takes A Village" Benefit Concert

On Sunday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, the church choirs from River Falls and the Community Gospel Choir will present a benefit concert for the people of Haiti. The concert will be held at Ezekiel Lutheran Church in River Falls at 7:00 pm. Many different genres and styles of music will be performed, and Dr. Camilla Horne of the UW-River Falls music department will lead the 100+ voice combined choir in two exciting numbers to conclude the concert. There will also be congregational hymn singing, and retired UW-River Falls professor, Curt Larson, will give a presentation about the sister village in Haiti. All proceeds help to aid the people of Haiti in building homes and schools. Please join the River Falls community at the "It Takes a Village" concert for an excellent night of music and a wonderful cause!

## All Church Summer Musical!

Once again our congregation will be performing an all-church summer musical! We will need many people to participate to make this show successful.

If you are interested in being a part of this production, please come to one of two informational meetings on **January 22nd or January 29th**. Both meetings will take place after the 10:30 service in the basement. If you can't make it to a meeting, please talk to Scott Perau for more information.

## Inaugural cribbage night a roaring success

The inaugural cribbage night was a great success with 24 people in attendance on Monday, January 9. Duane Church organized the event and Bob and Janet Johnson donated the cards.

The group will continue to meet on the second Monday of each month at the church. Players are asked to donate \$2 each night. After the "pot" gets established, the group will decide on a charity to which the money will be given.

Playing time starts at 7 p.m. At the February gathering, we will play singles from 7 until 9. If people wish to continue until 9:30, a double's challenge will be offered.

## 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!



*A NOTE OF  
Thank you for all the thoughts, prayers and support to our family during Roger's illness and death. Thanks especially to Pastor Chris, the office staff, Women's Fellowship and the kitchen helpers.  
~From the Family of Roger Amacker*

*"Let's have faith that right makes might; and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."  
~Abraham Lincoln*

## Adult Forum

### January 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?

### January 22: *Rise of Christianity: When Rome Ruled*, Barbara Peterson

Jesus' ministry, and subsequently the Christian tradition, emerged out of a specific time and place. The Roman world, including its politics, economics, social conviction and religious perspectives were an integral part of this historic context. The forum will include a video.

### January 29: *The Hidden History of the Financial Crisis*, Richard Gerczak

The forum will review the causes of the financial crash in 2008 and its continuing effects. The discussion will include information about terms people have heard but may not understand (i.e. Mortgage back securities, Derivatives, Credit Default swaps, Deregulation and Sub prime mortgage) and how they played a part in the collapse. The session will explore the motivations behind certain groups including Mortgage lenders, Federal Reserve, Wall Street, and Fannie Mae.

### February 5: *Was Do the Bible and the Theological Tradition Say about People?* Stacy Myers

"Theological anthropology" is the technical term for exploring what the Bible and the Christian tradition say about being human. Come with your ideas and questions ready for an interesting discussion.

### February 12 & 19: *First Congregational Reads*, Stacy Myers

The 2012 First Congregational Reads selection is *Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. The Adult forum is the context for discussions about the book. Come and discuss, come and listen.

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## 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 are available in the church office for \$17.00.

## Thursday Morning Bible Study

The Thursday Morning Bible Study group will meet **March 1 at 9:30 am**. The study is led by Stacy Myers. All are welcome!

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## Bible 101: Come Once, Come All

Four years ago we started "Bible 101," an opportunity to engage adults of the congregation in Bible study. Many, many people participated. The intention is to offer the sessions periodically so as to include new members as well. Three new sessions are planned. Each Bible 101 conversation is two hours in length and is designed to help people understand the overarching story of the Bible and its major themes. Participants are asked to sign up for one session. The conversations will be led by Stacy Myers. Please come if you have not attended a session. Please consider coming again. The following dates and times are available:

Sunday, February 26, 9:00 – 10:00 (Adult Forum)—first half of Bible 101

Sunday, March 4, 9:00 – 10:00 am (Adult Forum)—second half of Bible 101

Tuesday, March 6, 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Thursday, March 8, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

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## Lenten Cooks and Kitchen Workers

During the Wednesdays in Lent, we will gather together for a meal and an Evening Prayer worship service. This has become an important tradition for the congregation. We need cooks as well as volunteers to help with serving and clean up. To volunteer, please sign the list on the sign-up table or call the church office.

## River Falls Reads Hotdish and Jello Contest: Sign Up

The River Falls Library is organizing a “Hotdish and Jello Contest” as part of their River Falls Reads program. The event will be held at First Congregational Church on **February 16, starting at 6:00**. For \$1.00, people can come and sample eight different hotdish and jello creations and vote on their favorites. For those interested in staying, there will be a talk entitled “Hot Dish and Hot Flashes” by author and humorist Janet Martin. Apparently Janet Martin has some funny observations to relay about church kitchens and small towns. If you are interested in coming, please sign the reservation list and bring your dollar to the church office.



### Help! Hotdish and Jello Contest Volunteers Needed

In conjunction with the River Falls Reads program at the River Falls library, eight local congregations are holding a friendly hotdish and jello contest. Our new Fellowship Hall must be famous because we have been asked to host the event, held on **Thursday, February 16**. We need volunteers to help select and prepare what we hope will be award-winning hotdish and jello recipes. (If we are participating, we intend to do it right, correct?!) To volunteer, please call the church office or talk to Stacy Myers. Please help. It will not be a huge commitment, just a modest one.

### Upcoming Dates

- Sun, Feb 12...New Building Open House
- Thur, Feb 16...Church Ladies Cook-Off in the Fellowship Hall
- Sun, Feb 19...It Takes a Village Choir Concert
- Wed, Feb 22...Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper and Worship

Thanks to...

- ...Jeff Hoffman who tapes the weekly worship service so it can be on cable television
- ...Those who gave blankets in honor or memory of loved ones—\$1244 was given to Church World Service to supply emergency blankets to those in need.

Congratulations to...

- ...Marsha Pearson’s son Michael who marries Justine Schwartz on Saturday, January 14

Please remember in your prayers those who are grieving the death of...

- ...Roy Forehand, Bonnie Duven, Roger Amacker and Marian Wolfe



*Thank you to all those who delivered amaryllis plants—they were very much enjoyed by all who received them!*



## Puppet Ministry

The 'Puppet Force' Ministry Group will begin rehearsals for an upcoming February performance **Sunday, January 15 from 9:00-10:00 am** in the Youth Sunday School classroom. Weeknight rehearsals will begin **Monday, January 16 from 6:00-7:00 pm**. All youth: 2nd grade and up, middle/high school, and adults are invited to help with this production! 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 and see for yourself what Puppet Fever is all about.

Can't make the rehearsal this week? No worries - call Cheryl Solberg @ 715.377.1028 or 715.220.9844. Hope to see you there!

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## 2012 VBS Dates

Even though it is January, summer will be here shortly. Please be sure to save these dates. 2012 summer program dates are as follows:

Elementary Musical: June 25 - 28, afternoons

Older Kids' Musical: June 25- 28, mornings

VBS: July 30 - August 2, mornings

## No Wednesday School: February 1, 2012

Due to the early release at the River Falls elementary schools on February 1, 2012, we will not have Wednesday School.

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## Wednesday School Snack Volunteers Needed

Wednesday School is in need of three volunteers to provide snack for the Wednesday School participants. Please call the church office to volunteer.

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## Christmas Musical DVD Available

If you would like a DVD copy of the recent children's Christmas musical, please contact the office. The copies are available for a free-will offering.

## 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.

# Our Neighbors' Place SAYS THANK YOU!



*ONP Mission: to provide shelter and supportive services to families and individuals of Pierce and St. Croix Counties and to help people in need move toward independence and self-sufficiency.*

A big THANK YOU to all (including our Congregation) for your support of this very important Ministry in our community. Through your ongoing contributions of time, skill and dollars many of our less fortunate neighbors have had much to be thankful for in 2011. Here is a synopsis of the year and just what our community has done together. It was a year of building and transition for Our Neighbors' Place, as we purchased a 4-Plex on W Cedar, and made the transition from the rental on Johnson, while continuing to serve the families of Pierce & St Croix Counties seeking aid.

## EMERGENCY SHELTER:

- A. **215 West Cedar Street 4-Plex** purchased on January 31, 2011 with funds from:  
\$120,000 Capital Campaign Fundraising  
\$120,000 Interest free loan for three years from the City of River Falls (As of 12/1/2011 - \$40,000 has been paid off on the loan.)
- B. **June – Oct Refurbishing Project:** 3 garages converted to bedrooms, woodwork refinished, walls/ceilings painted, updated lighting, bathrooms & appliances, all laminate floors, insulation, sidewalks, landscaping... Hot nights, sweaty days and many hours resulted in four completed, furnished and nicely decorated apartments, including linens and dishes.  
*Volunteer Hours: 4,800 hours*
- C. **Shelter Nights:** A measurement of use of the Shelter is called Shelter Nights (each person is counted each night they stay during the month). The total Shelter Nights in 2011 was 2,973 (average 270 shelter nights per month). This included the months in Johnson rental apartments, as well as the transition to new W Cedar apartments. When a family is in Shelter they live free, giving them the chance to get back on their feet, find a job and then move within three months to their own place.  
*Volunteer Hours: (Shelter Support Team) over 1,224 hours*
- D. **The Transportation Team:** provided rides to job interviews, medical appointments, work or other related  
*Volunteer Hours: over 300 hours*

## DAY CENTER:

- A. **Operation:** Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm
- B. **Intakes:** The Day Center averages 16 families and 7 individual intakes each month.  
**Encounters:** Day Center use is measured in terms of encounters ie. return guest, visitor to WestCAP, The Closet shopper, or someone in to use the computers, phone or wash their clothes. (not visitors bringing donations, offering support, calling for needs information, or just stopping by)  
*Encounters per month: 284 encounters*
- C. **New Training Program:** for Guest Coordinators and a new Day Center Volunteer Manual  
*Volunteer Hours: Over 2,040 volunteer hours*

## THE CLOSET:

Provides quality clothing to the general public for purchase, and free to those in need. The Closet volunteers sort, wash, mend, decorate and assist shoppers. Profits from sales of clothing donations are used to purchase additional new items not donated.

*Volunteer Hours: over 780 hours*

## KINNICKINNIC BACKPACK PROGRAM:

Provides weekend Backpacks of food, to children in need, when other resources such as free and reduced-price school lunches are not available. Currently 35 backpacks going to the grade schools, middle school and Montessori. Cost per back pack per week is \$7.10

*Volunteer Hours: 60 hours per week*

## The Board of Directors

Our Neighbors' Place became a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation, gaining 501c(3) approval in June 2011

*Volunteer Hours: 252 plus hours (meeting time only... does not include fundraising, extra meetings or speaking at functions).*

As to date ONP does not have any paid employees.

We are extremely grateful to all of you for supporting ONP and believing in what we are doing for families and individual neighbors in Pierce and St. Croix Counties. ~ Mary Joan Sutton - President of Our Neighbors' Place Board

The Our Neighbors' Place Day Center • 136 North Riverwalk • River Falls, WI 54022 • 715-426-9000  
ourneighborsplace.org • ourneighborsplace@gmail.com

**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

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

110 N. Third Street  
 River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

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 RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

January 15, 2012

2012 JANUARY 2012						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
15 8:00 am Jubilee Ringers <b>9:00 am Worship Service</b> 9:00 am Adult Forum 9:00 am Puppet Ministry 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship <b>10:30 am Worship Service</b> 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast  ANNUAL REPORTS DUE	16 Puppet Ministry 6:00 pm	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 <b>9:00 am Worship Service</b> 9:00 am Adult Forum 9:00 am Puppet Ministry 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship <b>10:30 am Worship Service—</b> <b>New Members Received</b> 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast 3:00 pm Katie Fuller Ordination	23 Puppet Ministry 6:00 pm	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 <b>9:00 am Worship Service</b> 9:00 am Adult Forum 9:00 am Puppet Ministry 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship <b>10:30 am Worship Service</b> 10:30 am Sunday School 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast	30 Puppet Ministry 6:00 pm	31 Yoga 9-10:00 am  Prayer Group 10:00 am				

**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.