



# FIRST

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

*God is still speaking,*

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MARCH 1, 2011

## Pastor's Corner

With State Government at a standstill, here is what our Wisconsin Conference Minister is saying about the issue:

Dear friends and partners in the ministry of the Gospel. Grace, mercy, and peace be with you.

In a time of conflict and danger for his community, the prophet Isaiah offered an invitation from God to the people: "Come, let us reason together." (Isaiah 1:18)

These are words to take to heart in Wisconsin these days, as divisions in our common life are causing confusion and pain. We are all aware of the difficult economic circumstances facing our state. Many of our families and many United Church of Christ congregations find they have to make difficult choices. Our leaders face hard decisions about balancing a budget while continuing to provide essential services and preserve jobs that support families and build a healthy society.

We all know that sacrifices will have to be made. The question is how decisions will be made and if those who will be faced with the greater burden of these sacrifices will be given the respect that offers them a place at the table as decisions are made.

"Come, let us reason together" is not a strategy that avoids decisions but is an essential framework of a democratic society and is consistent with the moral and ethical principles that come out of our Christian faith. The right to negotiate is at the core of Wisconsin's history, and tough economic times are not a moment to turn away from these essential rights that provide for fair and just decision making.

When all come to the table and reason in good faith, better decisions are made. When people who are affected help make decisions, they have a greater stake in the outcome and provide a voice of support for decisions, even ones that may not be in their immediate self-interest. Basic human dignity is preserved.

As members of our congregations, let us remember that it is our neighbors and fellow church members and friends, and often our own families that are affected by the current attempt to remove essential rights and alter a long history of work for justice.

Let us remember with gratitude those who teach our children and who enforce the law and provide for safety and important services on our streets and in the many places where loyal public employees work to make our state a beautiful and wonderful place to live.

Let us uphold our leaders while also asking them to hold to the highest standards of our history and traditions that promote justice and insure respect for all persons. May we let them know that we offer our greatest hope and strength to them, knowing the extraordinary tasks that are before them.

May we all lift special prayers this Sunday for our state and for all who are involved in this important moment in our public life. Our prayers go out to families wondering about their future, to state workers, legislators, our governor, union leaders, and all of us as citizens. Let us pray that our churches may be a source of healing and may offer hope grounded in a God of justice and compassion who gifts us with the reason that can provide a just, fair, and respectful way through our common problems.

The Apostle Paul reminds us of the strong bonds that attend to human community and the call to each and all to seek not narrow self-advantage but the wider benefits of a just society. He calls the church, and through the church the society, to recognize that the Creator provides to each of us "varieties of gifts...and varieties of service...but it is the same God who activates them in everyone (and gives) to each the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

In faith, may we be advocates for that common good in the community of God's people that is Wisconsin.

Faithfully, Rev. David Moyer, Conference Minister, Wisconsin Conference, United Church of Christ

*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.*

## Back Bay Mission Commissioning

On **Sunday, March 6**, the 20 participants going on the Spring Break Mission Trip to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS will be commissioned into service at the 10:30 am worship service. Following the worship service there will be a final planning meeting for participants in the Fellowship Hall. The group will be in Biloxi from March 12th to the 19th. Please pray for them and the people whose houses they will be working on.



## Spring Fling

Even though the Spring Fling is a couple of months away, it is time to start thinking CRAFT ITEMS. We are hoping to have some nice things to sell at this booth, so if you have something you are working on – please finish it in time for the **SPRING FLING** on **MAY 14<sup>TH</sup>**. Some suggested items could include colorful tote bags, embroidery items, silk flower arrangements, jewelry, etc. Be Creative!

### TREASURER'S NOTES

Missy Luedtke

Financial Information for January and YTD:

	<u>January</u>	<u>2011 YTD</u>
Income	\$ 51,388.95	\$ 51,388.95
Expenses	\$ 32,562.36	\$ 32,562.36
Net	\$ 18,826.59	\$ 18,826.59

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

## Thursday Morning Bible Study

The Thursday Morning Bible Study group will meet **March 3, at 10:00 am**. The study is led by Stacy Myers. All are welcome!

## First Thursday Fellowship

First Thursday Fellowship resumes again on **March 3rd at 9:15 am** in the church lounge. Come hear the latest about our plans for spring—it's going to be new and exciting. At 10:00 Stacy will again lead us in Bible Study. It is a great way to spend a morning so come and join us. Hostesses will be Alice Hanson and Marguerite Barker.

## Mean Dads Club Convenes

We are back! The Mean Dads Club will meet again in March. Our focus this year will be on reading the book: *I Just Want My Kids to Be Happy! Why You Shouldn't Say it, Why You Shouldn't Think It, What You Should Embrace Instead*. The Mean Dads Club is open to any Dad who wants to grow in their parenting skills. Because of a delay in getting books, **we will meet on March 10, 24 and April 1 from 7 to 8 pm at the Dish and Spoon Coffee Shop**. Please see Pastor Chris for details. Use the sign-up sheet to let us know you are coming and if you want us to order a copy of the book for you (\$12 each).



## 2011 Relay for Life-River Falls

Please support our team with a donation via the Relay website at [www.relayforlife.org/riverfallswi](http://www.relayforlife.org/riverfallswi)

Everyone is invited to join us at the River Falls High School on **Friday, March 25th through Saturday, March 26th**. **Opening ceremony is at 6:00 pm and the luminaria ceremony is at 10:00 pm**. Also enjoy a great spaghetti dinner that Friday night or yummy breakfast in the

morning. Anyone can walk with us around the track and support our team (especially at 2:00 in the morning). Any questions, call Marie Roe at 715-381-1215.

## Adult Forum

### March 6: *Jesus' Transfiguration*, Stacy Johnson Myers

Jesus' transfiguration is one of the most confounding stories in scripture. The forum will explore the function and possible interpretations of the story. Insight from the St. John's Bible will be considered.

### March 13: *Exploring Islam*, Alan Tuchtenhagen

While many of us have a strong foundation in our own religious tradition, most of us are not familiar with the religious traditions of others. The forum will explore Islam, the tradition followed by an estimated one-fifth of the world's population.

### March 20: *Land: An Old Testament Perspective*, Stacy Johnson Myers

The people of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before they arrived at the Promised Land. It is a complicated story because land was important to Israel but also because the land was occupied by other people. The adult forum will consider an Old Testament perspective of land.

### March 27: *The Historical Jesus, Video and Discussion*, Jean Smith

The adult forum will focus on viewing and discussing a video about how Jesus is presented in the New Testament gospels as well as in sources outside the New Testament.

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## Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper

Our Pre-Confirmands (6th graders) will be serving the Annual Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper on **Wednesday, March 9 from 5:00 until 6:30 pm.**

The Ash Wednesday Worship Service will be at **6:30 pm** and will include imposition of ashes and communion. This is an All Worship Wednesday and all Confirmands and their parents are expected to attend. Please make a reservation for the meal.



## Lenten Cooks & Kitchen Workers

During the Wednesdays in Lent, we will gather together for a meal and an Evening Prayer service. This has become an important congregational tradition. We are in need of one more cook as well as people to help with serving and clean up. To volunteer, please sign the list on the sign up table or call the church office.

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## NEW Church Directory

There have been many inquiries about having a new directory. Two people have volunteered but we need one more to help head up this project. If you are interested in helping to coordinate this effort, please contact Lu in the church office.



## Our Next Road Trip

This is no mystery trip....we are going to the King Tut exhibit at the Science Museum on **Tuesday, April 11.** The sign-up sheet will be available with more details.

## Yoga Classes

Yoga classes will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 to 10:00 am in the Sunday School area. Yoga DVDs will be used for those interested in participating. Please bring a yoga mat and a large bath towel. There is no charge for being a yoga participant. Jan Hansen will return in April.

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## ARC Volunteers Needed

The Assistance & Resource Center Inc. (ARC) is in need of a secretary beginning in April. If interested, please attend the next meeting on Thursday, March 10 at 6:30 pm at the Library or call the ARC phone at 715-388-0755. ARC distributes funds donated by the churches, individuals, organizations and grants to those who are financially stressed.

## ***Shalom: A Vision of Life Together***

It is not necessary to have studied Hebrew to be familiar with the word *shalom*. The quick translation of *shalom* into English is “peace,” but the Hebrew word is more full than a quick translation suggests. The word *shalom* in the Old Testament scriptures includes dimensions of wholeness, health, justice, and the common good. In the Old Testament, *shalom*, is not restricted to people; it includes the whole creation. Accordingly, living with *shalom* means harmony and security for every living creature, as well as for people with the creation.

Jesus’ ministry focused on spreading *shalom*. Jesus brought those who were excluded into community life. He healed the sick and broken-hearted, he offered forgiveness, and he fed the hungry. Through these acts, Jesus brought *shalom* into a world filled with chaos.

*Shalom* is not presented in the Bible as a romantic vision for the world. Both the Old and the New Testaments are realistic about the ways in which God’s vision of life is corrupted and people fall short of living in *shalom*. In ancient times as well as today people often acted as if the present configuration of wealth and poverty is the way things are supposed to be. This thinking is a powerful justification for not making the kinds of changes necessary to truly bring *shalom* to the world. Another way of limiting *shalom* is by having a too narrow frame of reference. Settling for the appearance of safety and security today can come at the expense of long-term, pervasive *shalom*.

Scripture is abundantly clear that it is the responsibility of the powerful and the well-off to ensure that *shalom* reigns. Consider the example of ancient prophets who called kings and prominent citizens to realize that their faithfulness would be measured according to how they cared for and protected “widows and orphans,” those most vulnerable in society. Jesus, too, called on religious and political leaders to focus on the essence of the law, namely compassion for people, for those in need.

Walter Brueggemann writes: “The biblical vision of *shalom* functions always as a firm rejection of values and lifestyles that seek security and well-being in manipulative ways at the expense of another part of creation, another part of the community, or a brother or sister.” May we all seek to live in ways of *shalom*.

Stacy Johnson Myers  
Minister of Christian Education

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## **The 2011 Summer Program for Kids**

Registration forms for the 2011 Summer Program are available on-line. Sessions:

Elementary Musical, completed grades 1 – 5	June 20 – 23, 2011, 9:00 – 11:30 AM
Middle School Musical, completed grades 6 – 8	June 20 – 23, 2011, 1:00 – 3:30 PM
Day in the City, completed grades 6 - 12	July 6, 2011, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Vacation Bible School, age 3 – completed grade 5	August 1 – 4, 2011, 9:00 – 11:30 AM



### **Summer Church Camp**

Check out the card table in the history room for the new Summer Camp Brochures that are also available online at [www.ucci.org](http://www.ucci.org). If you are planning on attending any of the camps, please indicate the name of the camp and the date on the sign-up sheet. Scholarships are available from “First Thursday Fellowship” (formerly Women’s Fellowship) and also from our Wisconsin Conference. You may just want to try one of their popular family camps for your summer vacation; think about it!

## Spring Fling

Country Fair needs a facelift. Thus, we are giving you the opportunity to participate in its replacement, "Spring Fling." Bob Gustafson has agreed to lead this new endeavor. We will preserve some of the best of Country Fair and expand and enhance other opportunities.



Country Fair has been around many years and contributed much to Women's Fellowship. But this year we are seeking participation from men, women, and children for this event. All the details have not been worked out by an energetic committee, but here are some of the highlights.

Spring Fling will begin with a dinner honoring women on Mother's Day, May 8. Dinner will be served right after the second service. No woman over the age of 18 will be allowed to work at the dinner that day. Andy Krueger, resident chef, has agreed to coordinate this effort along with Bob. Tickets will be sold in advance for this event that will feature both an adult and children's menu. We are encouraging people to bring guests to this dinner.

May 8 will also be the kickoff for the silent auction. Available at the church are forms requesting a donation for the auction. The donation may be either a specific item or a service. We believe there are many people in our congregation that could offer one or both. It's time to put on your creative caps. To get you started, here are some ideas to consider: hosting a dinner in your home; lawn mowing, gardening help, child care, teaching a skill, a day or weekend at your cabin, athletic event tickets, special baked items that can be "cashed in" throughout the year, a day on the river if you own a boat, a lesson in a skill area, etc. Auction donation sheets will need to be returned by Sunday, May 1. The auction will close after the second service on May 15. If you care to donate more than one item, additional copies are available in the church office.

Events on Saturday, May 14 will include a "picnic" lunch as well as some of our favorite features from Country Fair: pies, plants, rugs, crafts, a bake sale, and, of course, food. We will not be collecting attic treasures, housewares, or linens this year. More activities will be happening that day as well including a carnival on the front lawn with activities for the young and young-at-heart.

So mark your calendars now. We hope you have an item or service to donate to the Silent Auction. Let's make this an event that is fun for all members of the family. Guys, the women of this church have done most of the fundraising over the years. Now, let's make this a gender-neutral event with help from everyone.

Watch the bulletin and newsletter for further information about "Spring Fling."



**Bowls For Hope** will be held benefitting the Kinnickinnic Backpack Program on **Tues, March 22, at 5:00 pm at the UWRF-University Center**. The funds raised from this event will be used to purchase vouchers for fresh fruit and vegetables. Tickets may be purchased at the door. The price is \$20 which gets you all the soup you could eat from various donating restaurants and a wonderful handcrafted pottery bowl. The Kinnickinnic Backpack Program is a supplemental food program serving students in the River Falls School District. It is run by volunteers and is not a federal or state supported program. Monies are raised by fundraisers, donations and grants. The program currently has 54 (students) participants, and anticipates this number to increase next school year. A volunteer takes the bags to the respective schools on Friday where they are picked up by the students. Bags are packed with one item from each food group; vouchers for perishable items that can be purchased at Dick's Market are included when a recipe calls for it. A dietitian supervises to make sure that what goes into the bags is as healthy as possible. Food is purchased from Second Harvest at pennies on the dollar, however choices are somewhat limited, so it is supplemented by vouchers when appropriate.

## A Benefit Breakfast

sponsored by "Haitian Relief Services" will be held at the Moose Lodge on **Sunday, March 13 from 9:00 am—1:00 pm**. The cost will be: adults, \$6.00; seniors and kids, \$5.00; and kids under 5, free. The Moose Lodge is located at 620 Clark Street, River Falls. All proceeds will go the River Falls Community Haiti project in Ganthier, Haiti. The Haitian people are still suffering the effects of the 2010 earthquake and need our help. Tickets are available in your church office and/or at the door.

**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  
 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  
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

March 1, 2011



2011 MARCH 2011						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am	2 3:30 pm Wednesday School 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30 pm Confirmation Year 1 (7th & 8th Grades) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Confirmation Year 3 (9th Grade)	3 Yoga 9-10:00 am First Thursday Fellowship 9:15 am Bible Study 10-10:30 am	4	5
6 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am Worship Service -Back Bay Commissioning 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast	7 Mission Ed Meeting 6:30 pm	8 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am 2nd Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	9 3:30 pm Wednesday School 5:00-6:30 pm Pancake Supper 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30-7:30 Ash Wednesday Worship Service 7:30 pm Chancel Choir	10 Yoga 9-10:00 am NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Co-op Meeting 5-9 pm Mean Dads 7:00 pm	11	12 Back Bay Mission Group Leaves
13 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 Daylight Savings Time Begins	14	15 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am 3rd Tuesday Soup 'n Sandwich 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's	16 No Wednesday Programs 5:00-6:30 pm Lenten Meal 6:30-7:00 pm Lenten Worship	17 Yoga 9-10:00 am	18	19 Back Bay Mission Group Returns
20 All Worship Sunday 9:00 am Worship Service 9:00 am Adult Forum 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am Worship Service 11:00 am WEVR Broadcast	21 Endowment Grant Requests Due	22 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am 4th Tuesday Banquet 5:00 pm at St. Bridget's Boards & Committees Meetings 6:30 pm Church Council Mtg 7:30 pm	23 3:30 pm Wednesday School 5:00-6:30 pm Lenten Meal 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30-7:00 pm Lenten Worship 7:00 pm Pre-Confirmation (6th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:30 pm Church Interns	24 Yoga 9-10:00 am Mean Dads 7:00 pm	25 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Relay for Life at the River Falls High School →	26
27 8:00 am Chancel Choir/ 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	28 Endowment Grant Meeting 6:30 pm	29 Yoga 9-10:00 am Prayer Group 10:00 am	30 3:30 pm Wednesday School 5:00-6:30 pm Lenten Meal 6:00 pm Jubilee Ringers 6:30-7:00 pm Lenten Worship 7:00-7:30 pm Confirmation Year 1 (7th & 8th Grades) & Confirmation Year 3 (9th Grade) 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	31 Yoga 9-10:00 am 3rd Year Confirmands Leave for New York Trip		