# First Congregational Church, UCC

110 North Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-2052 ■ www.firstchurchrf.org

November 15, 2026

Our mission is to love God and serve people.

Everyone is welcome because everyone matters.




## Pastor's Page

### Thankful Enough?

Is it possible to be thankful enough? Seriously, can we ever be too thankful?

One of the reasons I encourage people to travel, especially young people, is so they realize just how wonderful they have life. When we travel we learn just how blessed we are to live where and when we do. When we travel our eyes are opened, sometimes in surprising ways.

- Every teenager who complains they 'only' have the iPhone 17 when there is a new iPhone 18, should have to go to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi and see what real poverty looks like.
- Every adult who complains about not being able to afford a new car should travel to Honduras and watch people walk for miles to and from work and school and church.
- Every person who complains about having leftovers again, should go to Feed My Starving Children and wonder what it would be like to live on one small serving of rice a day.

Even the most modest among us here in River Falls live better than 99.99% of the rest of the world. As individuals and as a congregation we have been blessed.

And yet, in each of those above situations, I can see myself. I have ogled longingly at the latest fill in the blank (iPhone, clothes, vacation...). I too have complained about my cars which, though paid for, are now well into the sixth digit on the odometer. I too have complained about leftovers, again, somehow just wanting something different.

While every day should be an opportunity for thanksgiving, too often we are blinded by our immediate wants. November is the season for giving thanks for all that we have received. On Sunday, November 15th we will give thanks in two ways.

First, for many years now, we have gathered together as a church family to give thanks at our annual Thanksgiving Meal. There will be turkey, stuffing, dressing and lots and lots of other wonderful food. Make a reservation and bring your family and friends.

Second, on that same day, we will dedicate our financial pledges for the coming year. This is another way we give thanks to God for all that we have received. Being thankful involves thankful giving. Giving of our financial resources is one of the ways we do this and grow in generosity.

I look forward to eating and worshipping with you all on our annual Giving Thanks Sunday, November 15th!

In Gratitude, Pastor Chris

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, November 15
Giving Thanks Meal and Dedication of Pledges

Tuesday, November 17
All Church Meeting Night – 6:30 pm for Committees and 7:30 pm for Council

Wednesday, November 25
Blood Drive in the Fellowship Hall from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm

Wednesday, December 2, 9 & 16
Advent Evening Prayer in the Sanctuary at 6:30 pm

Tuesday, December 8
Christmas Luncheon with the River Falls High School Costumed Carolers

Sunday, December 20
Children's Program during Worship

Thursday, December 24
Christmas Eve Worship at 4:00 pm and 10:00 pm




## Giving Thanks Meal – Sunday, November 15

Join us on Sunday, November 15th, for our annual Giving Thanks Meal in the Fellowship Hall. Served after the 10:00 am worship service at around 11:00 am, this is your sneak peak of the Thanksgiving feast we will all enjoy later in the month with our families complete with all the fixins.

Please sign up and we ask folks to bring a side salad. We expect about 250 people so sign up early! We also need folks to help clean up. Serving is done by our 6-12th graders. Come Ye Thankful People Come!

## Sunday Morning Bible Study

Sunday morning Bible study prepares for worship by studying the Bible texts used in worship. The group meets at **9:00–9:50 Sunday mornings** in the Youth Room. Please join us! For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

## New Members Received

New members will be received on **Sunday, November 22** at the 10:00 am worship service. If you wish to join, please make sure the church office has your information by Nov 15. Please see Missy in the office or Pastor Chris for more information.

## Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study

The Wednesday Afternoon Bible Study continues to explore Revelation, the last book of the Bible. The group meets in the library on **Wednesdays, 1:00-2:30 pm.** For information about the next theme, contact Pastor Stacy.

## Used Men's Ties

Wednesday School needs used men's neck ties to turn into aprons. If you are fall cleaning and find unneeded ties, please bring them to the church office. Thanks!

## Important Upcoming Dates for Families

Please keep the following dates in mind as you plan your schedules:

- Advent musical rehearsal during Sunday School (Pre-School – Grade 5): November 15, 22 & 29, December 6, 13.
- Advent musical dress rehearsal (kindergarten – Grade 5): December 19, 9:00 am – 12:00 noon.
- Advent musical presentation: December 20, during worship.




## Wednesday Night Family Meals

On Wednesday nights, we offer a home-cooked meal in the Fellowship Hall. The cost is $9 per person with a family max of $30. **Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:00 pm.** You can get your meal to go if you go through the line (indicate when you sign up). **Reservations must be placed by noon on Tuesdays.** You can make a reservation online, the sign-up table or by calling the church office. The menu will be:

Nov 18 - Bruschetta chicken over pasta, asparagus salad, garlic toast

Nov 25 - No meal – Thanksgiving

Dec 2 - Lasagna and chicken alfredo, salad, garlic toast

Dec 9 - Chicken-ala king served over biscuit with fresh fruit

Dec 16 - Meatloaf, baked potato, vegetable, bread

## Dedication of the Memorial Garden Plaque






Thanks to all who attended the All Saints Worship Service on Sunday, November 1st. At the end of worship, we processed outside to the song 'When the Saints Go Marching In' and dedicated the plaque in memory of those twenty plus 'saints' who have been welcomed home to our Memorial Garden. If you want more information about the Memorial Garden see the flyer at church or the description on the church website. Special thanks to Marie Roe who spearheaded this project and Tim Bylander who installed and poured lots of concrete!



## Christmas Shoebox

The drive for Christmas Shoebox items for the gentlemen at Kinnic Falls Alcohol & Drug Abuse Center in River Falls has begun. If you would rather donate money, designate it for "Christmas Shoebox" and we will make sure all items are purchased. The list is on the gathering table.



## Bring Christmas Joy!

Each year we invite members of the church family to deliver an amaryllis plant to one of our shut-ins or special church friends. This is a wonderful, family-friendly activity that brings joy to both the giver and recipient. Simply sign up at church, prepare the amaryllis plant, and deliver it. Feel free to add a card or some cookies if you wish. Thank you for being part of this ministry of compassion.

## Winter Evergreen Porch Pots Sun, Nov 22, 1:00 pm



You are invited to make an evergreen porch pot to decorate for winter. Evergreen porch pot experts, Laura Anderson and Diane Clark, will help you learn to make one. All needed materials will be provided. If you want a specific pot, bring a one to two-gallon container, otherwise use a container that is provided. Note: recycled Christmas popcorn tubs work well.

Please bring a garden pruner (if you have one) and work gloves are recommended. While you don't need to pay for the materials, please give an offering of $25 which will in turn be given to the River Falls Food Pantry. You may bring your offering to the church office or place it in the offering plate marked Porch Pots. Please sign up. Space is limited to 12 participants.

## First Church Companions

Are you interested in being a companion to someone in our church connecting with them at least once a month with a call or visit? Or would you like to have someone for a companion. Please use the sign-up sheet. For more info talk to Lu Lueck or Pastor Bob.

## Side By Side Choir Concert



Each Monday morning, we in the church office enjoy the sounds of the Side by Side Choir practicing in the Fellowship Hall. This choir is comprised of community members and those with dementia. What wonderful music they make together! They will be presenting a concert on **Saturday, December 5th at 10:30 am** in the Fellowship Hall. Mark your calendars!




## Advent Evening Prayer Returns

Each Wednesday in Advent, we gather for worship using the Holden Evening Prayer Service of simple songs, scripture and stories. Join us on Wednesday, December 2, 9 and 16 at 6:30 pm in the sanctuary for the absolutely lovely thirty-minute worship service. Youth Groups, Confirmation Classes and Interns, will all start in worship and then move to class afterward.

Please also consider joining us for dinner at the Wednesday Night Family Meals which are served in the Fellowship Hall to all who register by Tuesday night. Meals are served from 5:15 to 6:00 pm. Join us!

## 2027 Discipleship Campaign

Each year the church conducts a Discipleship Campaign to financially support the ministry of First Congregational Church. Literally every program you see in the pages of this newsletter is supported through your financial giving. Thank you! This year pledge cards will be dedicated on Giving Thanks Sunday, November 15th. We ask of all our church members and supporters three things:

- First, if you don't pledge, please start this year.
- Second, if you do pledge, please increase your pledge, even if only slightly.
- Third, work toward a tithe recognizing all the ways God has blessed you and our call to share those blessings with others.

We understand that economic circumstances are difficult especially for our younger families so thank you for digging extra deep this year to enable our programs and ministry to continue as we seek to minister to our community.



## Poinsettias for Christmas Eve

Poinsettia sales in honor or memory of someone special have begun. The order forms are on the table. The cost is $15.00 each. Please return the order form with payment by Dec 13. The plants will be on display for the Christmas Eve services. You may pick your plants up after the 10:00 pm service on Christmas Eve. Proceeds of the sales go toward youth activities.



## Reverse Advent Calendar

Advent, which begins right after Thanksgiving, is a time of waiting and watching for the arrival of the Messiah at Christmas. Many of us use Advent Calendars at home with small gifts and chocolates as ways of counting down the days until Christmas. For the past few years, our Mission Committee has encouraged folks to join the Reverse Advent Calendar - giving instead of getting. We all know that with government cuts and shutdowns, many families are struggling to put food on the table. Starting on Giving Thanks Sunday, November 15, our Mission Team will be handing out paper bags with the Reverse Advent Calendar attached. Each day (or week) we ask you to place items in the bag until it is full with 25 needs items for the Food Pantry. Bring the completed grocery bag back to church by Christmas (or earlier!). After they are dedicated, our Mission Team will bring all the items to the Food Pantry. Bless you for your generosity.



## Sharing Families Giving Tree

If you would like to help some children have a better Christmas this year, please select an ornament from the tree and purchase a gift from their wish list. The unwrapped gift with the ornament needs to be at the church no later than noon Thursday, December 11. Please give the gift cards to someone in the church office. If you would like to a make a cash donation instead, please make out to First Congregational Church with "Sharing Families" in the memo line. Thank you for your generosity. If you have questions, please contact Diane Welsh (651-334-3128 or 715-386-6620) or the church office.

## Tax Savings and Church Blessing

If you have appreciated assets and are looking for a way both to reduce your taxes and contribute to the church mission & ministry, consider donating some of your Required Minimum Distribution to the church.

**Stock Giving -** Donating appreciated assets avoids federal capital gains taxes and provides a federal income tax deduction for the current market value of the gift. Similar state tax benefits are also provided in most of the country. Most importantly, you'll be making a powerful difference for your church or another charity.

**IRA Giving -** For church supporters age 70.5 or older, IRA gifts present a powerful way to save while you give. Generally speaking, IRA gifts are always tax-free and can help you reduce your future tax burden, satisfy a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) if you have to take one, while supporting your congregation.






## Annual Christmas Luncheon

You are invited to attend a Christmas Luncheon on **Tuesday, December 8, at 12:00 noon**. The menu features Norwegian meatballs and a large collection of Christmas cookies.

The River Falls High School Costumed Carolers will sing. Please come! The cost is $10.00 per person.

Please make a reservation by signing the list on the sign-up table, registering online or calling the church office.

## Volunteers Needed for the Christmas Luncheon

Thank you to those who have already volunteered to help with the Christmas luncheon. We still need a few more volunteers for serving and the kitchen. Many hands make light work! We also continue to need cookie bakers which is sweet work.

## Children's Advent Musical

Sunday School children in pre-school through grade 5 have begun working on the Advent musical, *The Christmas Guest,* for 2026. It is important for the children to have consistent attendance so they are able to learns lines and songs.

The dress rehearsal will be on Saturday, December 19, 10:00–12:00 noon, for children in kindergarten through grade 5.

The musical will be presented during worship on Sunday, December 20.



## The Advent Workshop

The 2026 Advent Workshop for families will be in the Fellowship Hall following Sunday School on **December 6**, the Second Sunday in Advent.

The event includes making a variety of Christmas ornaments. If you have friends or neighbors considering participation in a church family, invite them to join you!

## College Packs Thanks

One of the traditions of the church is to send College Packs to those studying in College, Tech School of the Military. Here are some pictures texted back from our grateful kids. Thank you church for remembering our young people in this way.







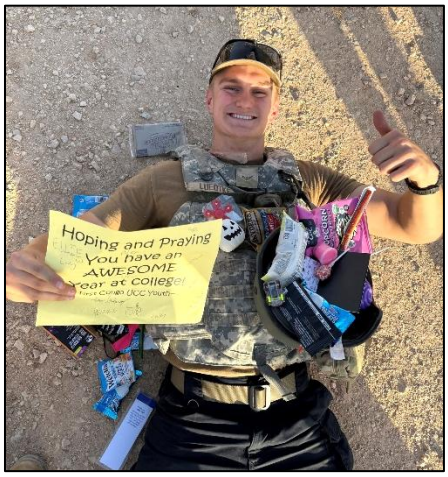

















## What the Pastor Is Reading

The New Dark Ages: The Death of Reading and the Dawn of the Post-Literate Society by James Marriott

This book has been on my radar and then appeared on my desk (thank you!). We are now entering a post-literate society. Put simply, people don't read, they watch screens. Gone are long read books and in are shorts and reels. How will this affect us culturally, economically, socially, not to mention theologically? Only half-way through, but enjoying the author's take on this.

## 2027 Back Bay Mission Trip

Ever wanted to go on a mission trip? Heard about the awesome experiences so many of our church folks have had at UCC-related Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi? Just want to get out of town to someplace warm? Join us! Our church is sponsoring yet another trip to Back Bay Mission, **April 18–24, 2027**. Please contact Carol Merriman or Pastor Chris for details. Use the sign-up sheet to register your interest. **Please let them know no later than November 15 so we can reserve transportation!**

## Endowment Grants

Each quarter the Endowment Grant Committee meets to evaluate proposals for new ministries and projects submitted through our church committees. Is there a need in the church or community your group wants to address? Consider applying for an Endowment Grant! All proposals must come from a committee, and the next due date is **December 6**. Forms can be accessed at church office or on the website.

## Among Friends Volunteers Needed

The program meets two days a week. Training is provided & the rewards are phenomenal! They are particularly in need of male volunteers but are willing to receive all. Contact them at amongfriendsrf@gmail.com

## Red Cross Blood Drive

The next Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church is on **Wed, Nov 25, from 11:00 am–5:00 pm**. See the flyer for more info. Call 1-800-733-2767 or go to www.redcrossblood.org and enter: firstcongregationalrf to schedule an appointment.

## Basics for Local Kids (BLK)

BLK is a non-profit organization that provides winter-wear to local kids in need from infant to 18 years old. Please consider making a donation of gently used or new coats, snow pants, boots, hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, or socks. Donations can be placed in the bin at church. Volunteers are needed to help families shop, or to sort and restock items. To volunteer go to www.BasicsforLocalKids.org or call Kim Johnson at 715-821-1623. Thank you for your generous, continuing support. Other questions, contact Renee Whipple at 715-307-5074.

## Name Tags

We encourage you to wear your name tags so that everyone can call you by name. It would also help the deacons when you take communion. If you do not have one, please let Missy in the church office know at missy@firstchurchrf.org. In appreciation, the Welcoming Committee.

## Thrivent Free Money

Do you have a retirement account through Thrivent? If so, you can designate some or all of your 'choice dollars' to a non-profit such as First Congregational. We are now set up to receive such gifts. Talk to the church office if you need more information.

## WISE Corner

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group meets on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at 113 East Elm St (Mei Mei's) & Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at First Congregational Church at 6:30 pm.

For mental health issues, please call 988. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

## Treasurer's Report

| | Week of Nov 1, 2026 | Year to Date |
|---|---|---|
| General Fund Income* | $ 6,580 | $ 475,248 |
| General Fund Operational Needs | $ 11,308 | $ 497,248 |

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

## Church Staff Contact Info

Pastor: Chris Myers - chris@firstchurchrf.org
Education: Stacy Myers - stacy@firstchurchrf.org
Mission: Bob Wang - pbobcca@outlook.com
Office: Missy Luedtke - missy@firstchurchrf.org
Youth: Alex Plum - rfyouthgroup@gmail.com
Music: Jamie Mills - degolierjamie@gmail.com
Choir: Sarah Plum - sarah.e.plum.95@gmail.com
Building: Farnum Fuller - farnumfuller@gmail.com
Troy Zakrzewski - ztruck51ford@gmail.com
Maintenance: Tim Bylander - timthefixitguy@gmail.com

# Church Council Meeting
# October 20, 2026

Treasurer's Report – Missy reported that giving was low in September but donations to the general fund were up in October. Endowment funds were utilized for some expenses as necessary. Over all, year to date we are in the black $13,000. Expectation is that giving around the holidays increases.

New Business:

Council book read for 2026-27 - Theo of Golden by Allen Levi - Discussion.

Old Business:

New AED – Chris - battery is expected soon. Carole Mottaz has been working on this.

Memorial Garden Sign Update - Dedication on All Saints Day Nov 1- at the end of worship, before coffee fellowship

Tuck Pointing and Building Issues – Louie - Matthew, Tim and Lance met several times. Some changes have been made about the extent of the project. They want to provide a proposal to 3 contractors to make sure they are all reviewing the same needs. This will likely initiate a Capital Campaign.

Ministry:

Christian Education (Angie) - In April 2027, Erin Welsh will lead a learning community for parents regarding stress and building resilience in children. An endowment grant to fund the speaker was requested.

Deacons (Paul) - 6 deacons will attend the new member class. They revised their sign-up link for duty days, they reviewed the process tonight related to food safety and consistency.

Discipleship (Chris) - gearing up for the financial campaign. Letters will be sent this week. Speakers scheduled.

Endowment Grant (Norma) - approved 3 grant requests for $3,000.00 each. Balance $1,550.00 for remainder of year.

Mission Education (Carol) - Earth Fest involvement discussed. We will create "earth balls" again this year. The committee also discussed the Sleep in Heavenly Peace project.

Music (Dave) - no report

Personnel (Alan) - staff evaluations are being conducted. They will meet in November to review the information. They will meet in December with the Trustees. Need to work on Chris's sabbatical arrangements.

Trustees (Louie) - fire suppression is repaired - $2,700.00, alley stairs are completed and sealed. Bathroom drains are under repair. Congregation, once again, needs to thank Tim Bylander for all his work. Fall clean-up is scheduled for Saturday. The white board in the youth room is peeling and the repair or replace cost needs to be explored. Also exploring a projector screen to be used in the youth room.

Welcoming Ministry (Lu) - discussion about the sign-up table, updated the articles of the committee, Rene will do Mission Moment, signed up for coffee fellowship and welcoming. Pastor Bob and Lu are working on updating and changing the process to the companion program.

Pastor (Chris) - The church is busy with groups almost daily and the kitchen is being used as much if not more. The Side by Side Choir is going well. Making preparations for a May-July Sabbatical, November 1 All Saints Sunday with dedication of the plaque, Giving Thanks Sunday, November 15th with meal and dedications.

Moderator (Marie) - reminder by November that we need the requested budget for 2027 to Missy and the Trustees. Tomorrow the investment committee will meet with United Church funds to join them.

WISE (Dave) - Pastor Bob, Chris reported: Rose R. will host a breathing exercise on October 29th. Exploring a winter solstice event (the longest night)

Respectfully submitted, Jo Anne Friedell, Clerk




## Grace Place

Supply needs:

- New adult undergarments (underwear up to size XXL)
- New bras
- New or like-new sweatpants up to size 4X
- New or like-new T-shirts up to size 4X
- New shoes (adult men and female)
- Adult socks
- Belts
- Shampoo, conditioner, body wash & lotion-large or travel size
- Good buys

There is a bin at church for donations. Thank you!

## Empty Pill Bottles (Prescription Only)

The River Falls Lions Club is collecting empty pill bottles, only the clear prescription bottles that are filled by our pharmacists, to send to Africa where there is an urgent need. The bottles will be washed, and the labels soaked off before they are shipped. A tub is in the gathering area. If you have questions, contact Carole Mottaz.

## River Falls Food Pantry

The pantry is currently in need of: toilet paper, cereal, peanut butter and cooking oil. Information about donations is on their website at https://rfcfp.org/. Donations can be brought to 705 St. Croix Street during their hours of operation:

Mondays 10:00 am–12:00 pm
and 6:00–7:30 pm
Wednesdays 1:00–5:00 pm
Thursdays 6:00–7:30 pm
Fridays 10:00 am–12:00 pm



## Let's Knit/Craft Together

Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am.** We meet at **The Sycamore on the first Thursday of each month and in the Fellowship Hall at church the other Thursdays.** We have a great time sharing our current projects and enjoying each other's company. Any questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or firstroe@gmail.com

## Church Yoga

The yoga group meets on **Tuesdays & Thursdays** in the Fellowship Hall from **9:00-10:00 am** and via Zoom. Please contact the church office to receive the Zoom link.

## Women's Group

Interested in fellowship and community with other women? You are invited to join the group at noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month. Please bring a lunch. The next meetings will be **Nov 24 & Dec 8.**

## Men's Group

Our church men's group meets **every other Tuesday.** We gather for conversation and fellowship around a scripture verse or story. All guys are welcome to join us at **9:00 am in the Youth Room.** Our next gatherings are **Nov 24 & Dec 8.** Join us!

## Merry Widows

They will meet on **Wed, Nov 18, at 1:00 pm at Eunice Filkins' home.** Lunch will be provided. All widows are welcome to join for dinner & conversation! See Linda Morrow for more info.

## Game Day Sunday

Game Day Sunday is held on the third Sunday of the month. Our next Game Day is **Nov 22 at 11:45 am.** Join us!

## Veterans Coffee Chat

Held on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:30 am at The Sycamore in River Falls. Coffee and pastries are provided. Contact Megan at The Sycamore 715-997-3441 with questions.

## Among Friends

Among Friends is a community-based social respite program serving adults with memory loss who reside in Pierce and St. Croix Counties. For more information, contact them at 715-293-2561. Also, check out the website: amongfriendsrf.com and the Facebook page. Among Friends is located at the church and is held on **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.**

## Offering QR Code

1. On your device, open Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click tab 'Give Online'

First Congregational Church, UCC
River Falls

Office Phone: 715-425-2052
E-mail: office@firstchurchrf.org
Website: www.firstchurchrf.org

### *STAFF*

Chris Myers, Pastor
Stacy Johnson, CE Minister
Bob Wang, Minister for Community and Outreach
Missy Luedtke, Office Administrator
Marie Roe, Moderator
Alex Plum, Youth Minister
Jamie Mills, Music Coordinator and Bell Choir Director
Sarah Plum, Choir Director
Marsha Pearson, Organist
Terry Mithun, Organist
Tim Bylander, Building Supervisor
Farnum Fuller, Custodian
Troy Zakrzewski, Custodian

Pastor's home phone number:
Chris Myers 715-426-2075
chris@firstchurchrf.org

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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PERMIT #53
RIVER FALLS, WI 54022

NOVEMBER 15, 2026

## Altar Flowers

Please sign up to provide flowers for the altar for Sunday worship. Sign up at church or on the church website: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-altar

## Welcomers Needed

Please sign up to be a welcomer on Sunday morning before the worship service. One person is needed for at the bottom of the stairs and one person is needed at the ramp entrance. Please arrive 20 minutes prior to worship. Sign up at church or here: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-welcomers

## Coffee Fellowship Hosts and Liturgists Needed

Coffee Fellowship Hosts will be asked to serve Best Maid cookies which are in the church freezer, make lemonade and serve coffee. All the materials are provided; you will simply need to serve and clean up. Sign up at church or on the website: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-coffee

Liturgists will lead us in the Call to Worship and one of the Scripture Lessons. The material will be emailed out on Thursday to practice. Sign up at church or on the website: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054BA9AD29A4FF2-liturgist

Please note church interns can receive credit for either of these activities. Thank you for volunteering in these important ministries as we continue our journey.

## Newsletter Deadlines

The church newsletter is sent out twice a month. Deadlines are the 10th and 25th of each month. Items should be sent to the church office no later than those dates.