

**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

December 19, 2021



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN**

December 19, 2021

Fourth Sunday in Advent

10:00 am

Gathering

The church asks us to understand that Christ, who came once in flesh, is prepared to come again. When we remove all obstacles to his presence he will come, at any hour and moment, to dwell among us, bringing with him the riches of his grace.

--Charles Borromeo, 16th Century

<p>Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today! Join us for coffee in the Fellowship Hall following the worship service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The nursery is available for young children.- Activity bags are available for children.- Large print bulletins and hearing-impaired devices are available from the ushers.- Please stand when noted by the *- Congregation responses are in bold.	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>As Jesus' courageous disciples, living God's grace, we strive to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Worship faithfully</i>- <i>Welcome openly</i>- <i>Grow spiritually</i>- <i>Care passionately</i>- <i>Serve generously</i>
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GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: The fourth candle is the candle of LOVE. In love, God sent Jesus to live among us.

P: **Because of his coming and his love, we, with the rest of creation, may know his salvation.**

L: Nothing makes sense without love. It transforms justice to compassion, interest to concern, wisdom to understanding. It lasts when all else has failed.

(Light the fourth Advent candle)

P: **God of love who incarnated love in your Son, help us to love even as you have loved us.**

All: **Come, let us worship the God who leads us into life!**

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Gracious God, when we find ourselves irritable and preoccupied with the pulsating and demanding rhythms of daily life,

P: **Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

L: When we talk peace, but do not walk peace,

P: **Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

L: When we lose sight of the Child whose coming transforms the world,

P: **Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

L: When we push away and keep out others who need us,

P: **Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

L: When kindness and generosity fail us,

P: **Have mercy on us, O Lord.**

All: **Grant, that we may be conscious of your presence among us, so that we may stay centered in the sacredness of each moment. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Hear the good news!

P: **Like Mary let us rejoice at the new thing God is doing in our world.**

L: Hear the good news!

P: **Like Joseph let us marvel at the unexpected gift of joy brought to each of us.**

L: Hear the good news!

P: **And like John let us turn from our wayward paths and be at peace.**

L: May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

P: **And also with you.**

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

***GLORIA**

He Came Down

He came down that we may have joy;

He came down that we may have joy; Hallelujah forevermore.

He came down that we may have love;

He came down that we may have love; Hallelujah forevermore.

Hearing the Word

PSALM 80:1-7

R



- L: Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!
- P: **You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.**
- L: Stir up your might, and come to save us!
- P: **Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.**
- L: O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?
- P: **You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure.**
- L: You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves.
- P: **Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. R**

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 1:39-45

Proclaiming the Word

Twinkle! Twinkle!

Pre-School Children

*Twinkle, twinkle stars so bright, shining on that Christmas night.
Shining for the world to see, Christ was born for you and me.
Twinkle, twinkle, stars so bright, shining on that Christmas night.*

On This Holy Night

Sunday School Children

*Baby Jesus, in a manger, a manger filled with light.
Baby Jesus, the Savior of us all, on this holy night.
Baby Jesus, child of heaven, we come to bless your name.
Baby Jesus, the Son of God is here. Here on earth to reign.
Born in a lowly manger, laid in a cattle stall,
Sent to the world a stranger, bringing peace and good will to all.
Baby Jesus, in a manger, a manger filled with light.
Baby Jesus, the Savior of us all, on this holy night.
Baby Jesus, the Savior of us all on this holy night. On this holy night.*

To Abraham and Sarah

Verse 1 - Choir; Verse 2 - Congregation

*To Abraham and Sarah
the call of God was clear:
“Go forth and I will show you
a country rich and fair.
You need not fear the journey
For I have pledged my word:
That you shall be my people
And I will be your God.”*

*From Abraham and Sarah
arose a pilgrim race,
dependent for their journey
on God’s abundant grace.
And in their heart was written
by God this saving word:
That “you shall be my people
And I will be your God.”*

Prayer

When Israel Was in Egypt’s Land

Sunday School Children

*When Israel was in Egypt’s land, Let my people go.
Oppressed so hard they could not stand, Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go.
No more in bondage shall they toil, Let my people go,
Nor spill their blood on Egypt’s soil, Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go.
Oh, let us all from bondage flee, Let my people go,
And let us all in Christ be free, Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go.*

Prayer

I Will Sing Like David Sang

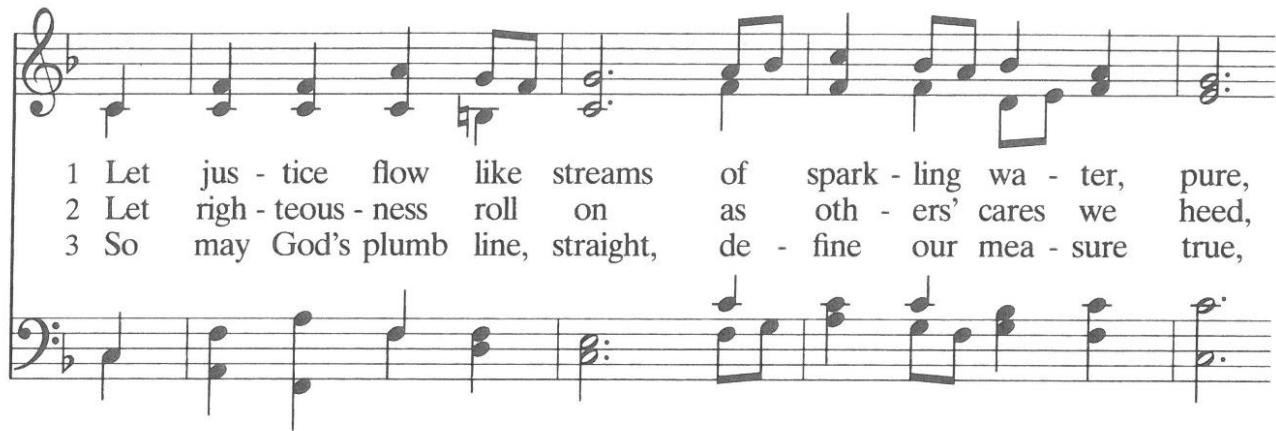
Sunday School Children

*When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart I will sing like David sang.
When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart, I will sing like David sang.
I will sing, I will sing, I will sing like David sang.
I will sing, I will sing, I will sing like David sang.
When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart I will pray like David prayed.
When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my heart, I will pray like David prayed.
I will pray, I will pray, I will pray like David prayed.
I will pray, I will pray, I will pray like David prayed.*

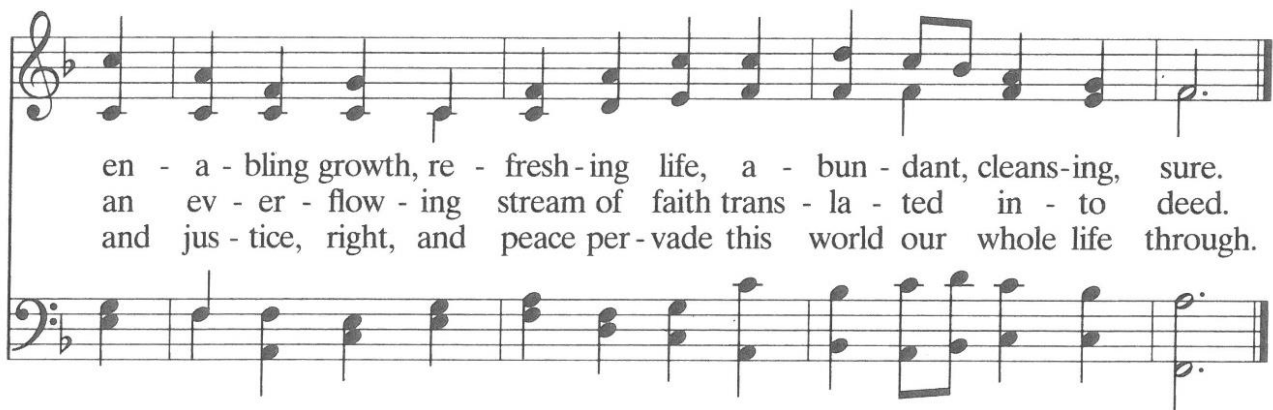
Prayer

Let Justice Flow like Streams

Verse 1 - Cantors; Verse 2 - Choir; Verse 3 - Congregation



1 Let jus - tice flow like streams of spark - ling wa - ter, pure,
2 Let righ - teous - ness roll on as oth - ers' cares we heed,
3 So may God's plumb line, straight, de - fine our mea - sure true,



en - a - bling growth, re - fresh - ing life, a - bun - dant, cleans - ing, sure.
an ev - er - flow - ing stream of faith trans - la - ted in - to deed.
and jus - tice, right, and peace per - vade this world our whole life through.

Prayer

Comfort, Comfort Now My People – NCH #101

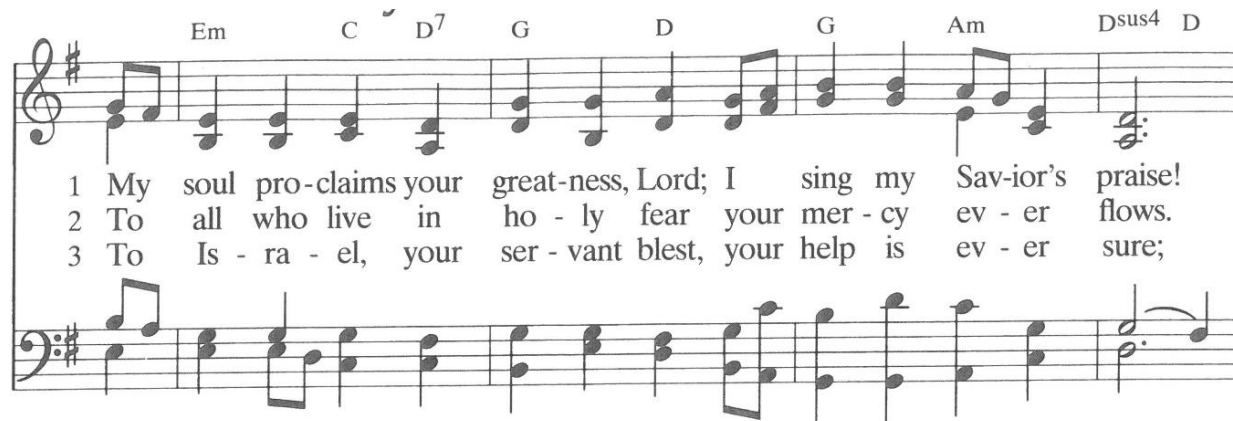
Verses 1 and 2 - Choir; Verse 3 - All

Prayer

My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness

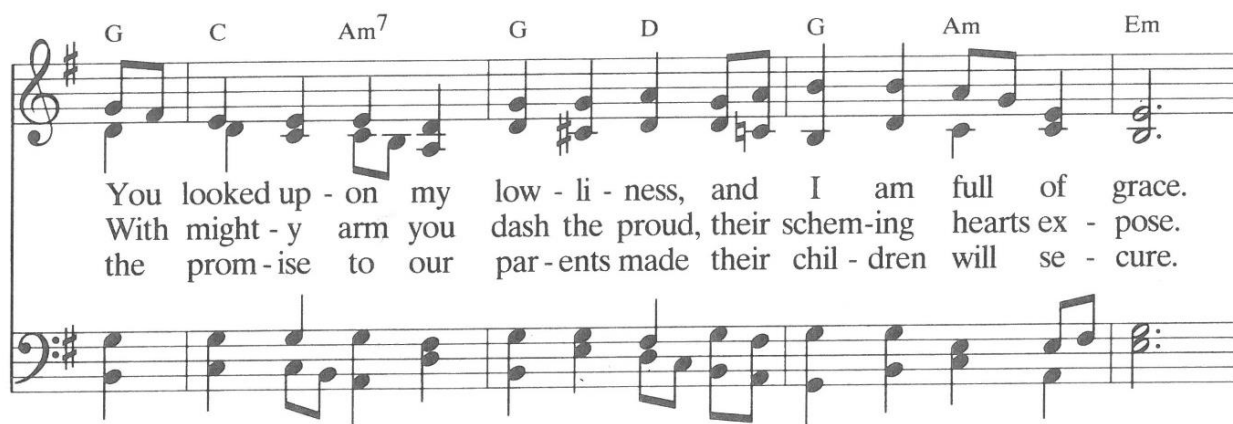
Verse 1 - Solo; Verse 2 - Choir; Verse 3 - All

Em C D⁷ G D G Am Dsus4 D



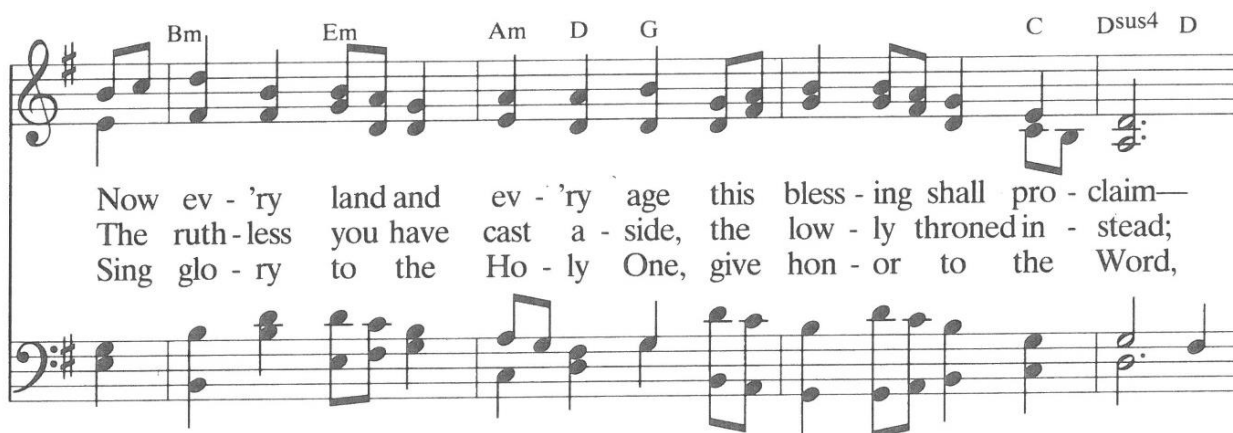
1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav-ior's praise!
 2 To all who live in ho - ly fear your mer - cy ev - er flows.
 3 To Is - ra - el, your ser - vant blest, your help is ev - er sure;

G C Am⁷ G D G Am Em



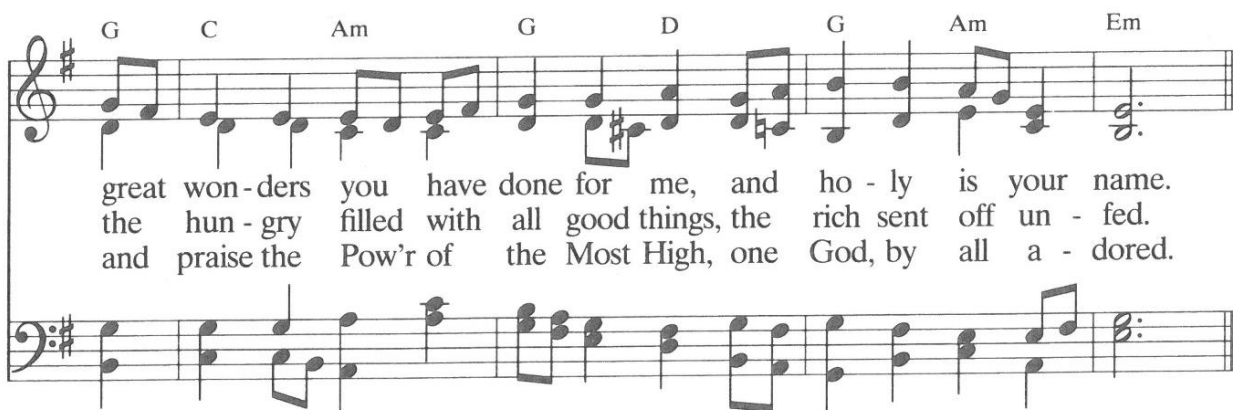
You looked up - on my low - li - ness, and I am full of grace.
 With might - y arm you dash the proud, their schem-ing hearts ex - pose.
 the prom - ise to our par - ents made their chil - dren will se - cure.

Bm Em Am D G C Dsus4 D



Now ev - 'ry land and ev - 'ry age this bless - ing shall pro - claim—
 The ruth - less you have cast a - side, the low - ly throned in - stead;
 Sing glo - ry to the Ho - ly One, give hon - or to the Word,

G C Am G D G Am Em



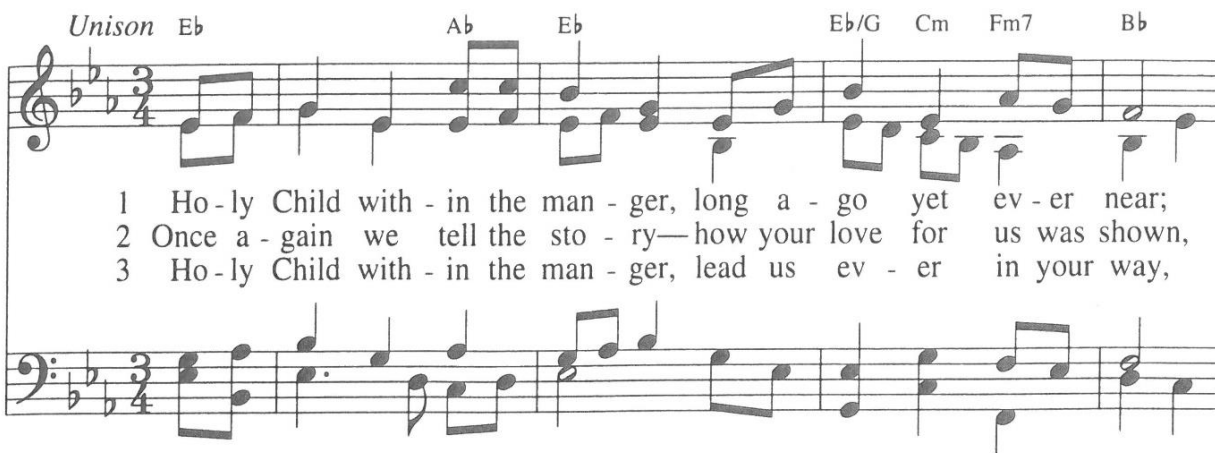
great won - ders you have done for me, and ho - ly is your name.
 the hun - gry filled with all good things, the rich sent off un - fed.
 and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all a - dored.

Prayer

Holy Child Within the Manger

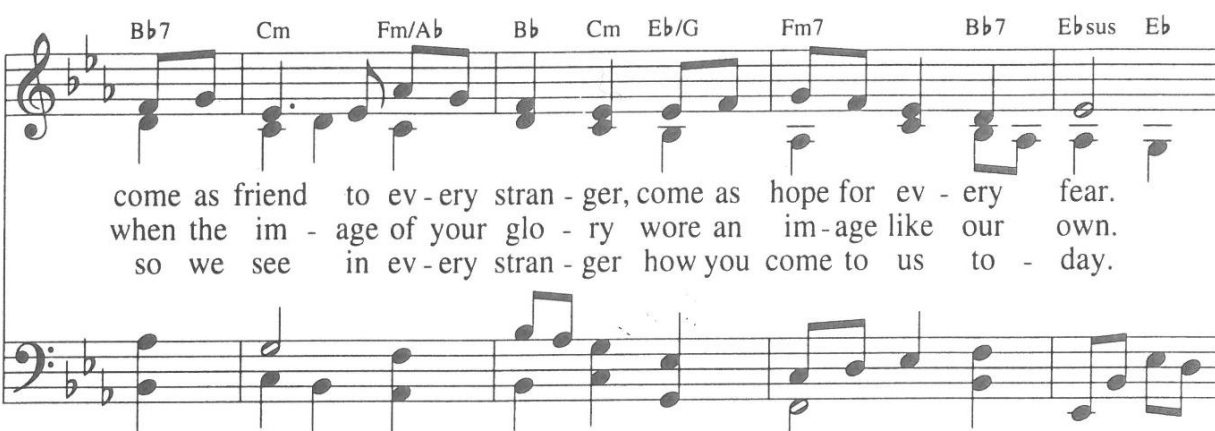
All

Unison Eb Ab Eb Eb/G Cm Fm7 Bb



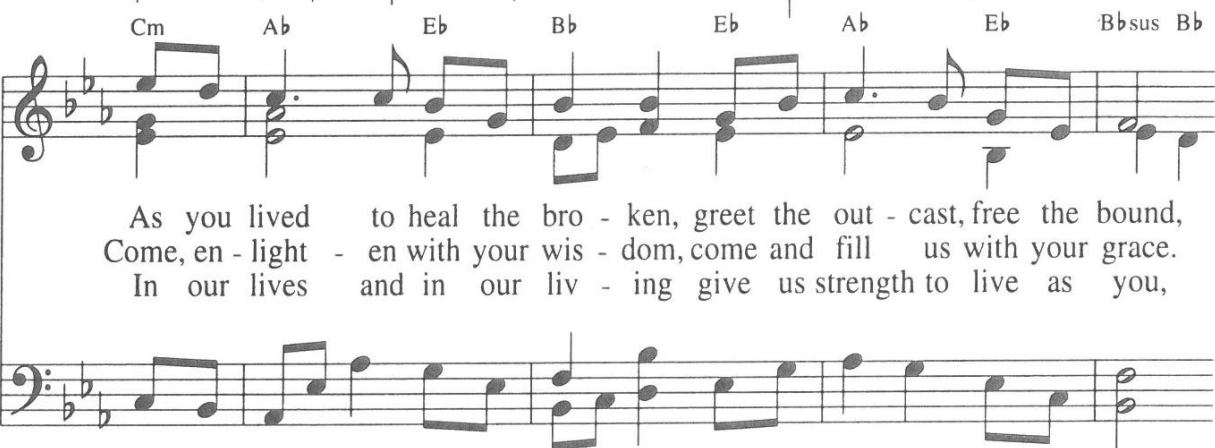
1 Ho-ly Child with - in the man - ger, long a - go yet ev - er near;
2 Once a - gain we tell the sto - ry—how your love for us was shown,
3 Ho-ly Child with - in the man - ger, lead us ev - er in your way,

Bb7 Cm Fm/Ab Bb Cm Eb/G Fm7 Bb7 Ebsus Eb



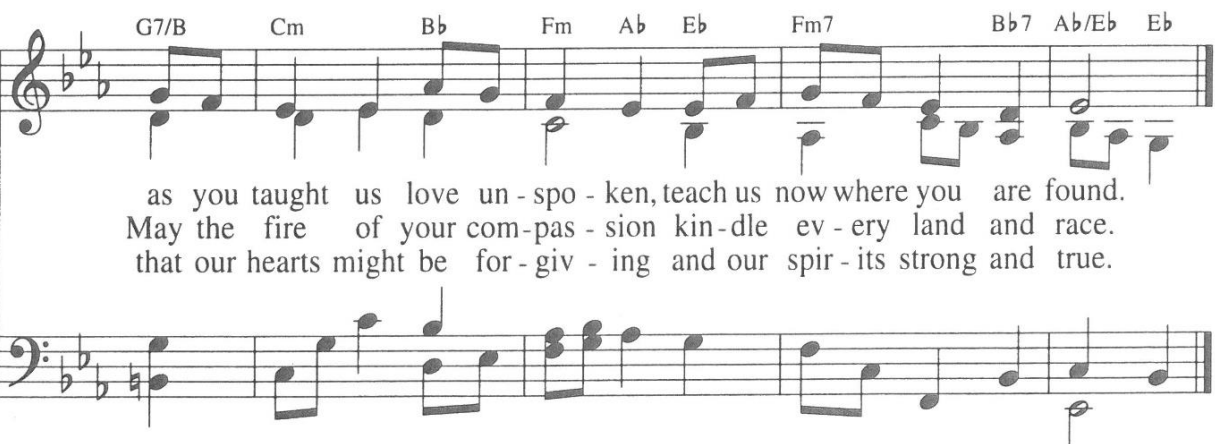
come as friend to ev - ery stran - ger, come as hope for ev - ery fear.
when the im - age of your glo - ry wore an im - age like our own.
so we see in ev - ery stran - ger how you come to us to - day.

Cm Ab Eb Bb Eb Ab Eb Bbsus Bb



As you lived to heal the bro - ken, greet the out - cast, free the bound,
Come, en - light - en with your wis - dom, come and fill us with your grace.
In our lives and in our liv - ing give us strength to live as you,

G7/B Cm Bb Fm Ab Eb Fm7 Bb7 Ab/Eb Eb



as you taught us love un - spo - ken, teach us now where you are found.
May the fire of your com - pas - sion kin - dle ev - ery land and race.
that our hearts might be for - giv - ing and our spir - its strong and true.

THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.**

...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Celebrating the Meal

(All Christians, regardless of denomination, tradition or age are welcome at the table of our Lord.)

The Invitation to the Meal

The Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

P: **And also with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

L: We offer you praise, O Lord our God, ...

The Words of Institution

L: Therefore, with all your witnesses in heaven and on earth, we rejoice in this holy meal as we remember the mystery of faith...

All: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Prayer of Consecration

Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

Let Us Break Bread Together

Let us break bread together on our knees; Let us break bread together on our knees;

**Refrain: *When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.***

Let us drink wine together on our knees; Let us drink wine together on our knees; Refrain

Let us praise God together on our knees; Let us praise God together on our knees; Refrain

As We Gather at Your Table – NCH #332

In the Lord

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice! Look to God, do not be afraid;

Lift up your voices, the Lord is near; lift up your voices the Lord is near.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

All: We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

Awake! Awake, and Great the New Morn

NCH #107

***BLESSING**

The blessing of the God of Sarah and Abraham

The blessing of the Son, both of Mary

The blessing of the Spirit who broods over us as a mother over a child,

Be with you all.

Let us go from here in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Note about offering: During the pandemic we are not passing the offering plate. We thankfully receive your gifts, tithes and offerings in the offering plate on the back table. Your generosity is the engine that powers our church community. Thank you.

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Assisting in today's worship service are:

Liturgist:	<i>Larissa Lueck</i>
Coffee Fellowship:	<i>Personnel Committee</i>
Deacons:	<i>Cindy Gandrud, Jena Most, Traci Hagberg, Karen Lloyd</i>
Welcomers:	<i>Dennis and Lynn Linder</i>
Nursery:	<i>Kahla Fuller</i>
Organist:	<i>Terry Mithun</i>
Video Team:	<i>Jeff Hoffman, Mike Stifter</i>
Trustee:	<i>Jeff Hoffman</i>
Counters:	<i>Jean Smith, Allen Barnes</i>
Music Coordinator & Bell Director:	<i>Jamie Mills</i>
Choir Director:	<i>Sarah Plum</i>
Church Moderator:	<i>Joel Larsen</i>
Office Administrator:	<i>Missy Luedtke</i>
Youth Ministers:	<i>Alex and Sarah Plum</i>
Minister for Community:	<i>Rev. Dave Ostendorf</i>
CE Minister:	<i>Rev. Stacy Johnson Myers</i>
Senior Pastor:	<i>Rev. Chris Myers</i>

Altar table flowers are given by David Reilly in memory of Ruth Reilly.

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Peg Thompson, Roger Hirstein, Jim, Wendy MacDougall (wife of our Association Minister Rob), Edna (friend of the Danielsons and Petersons), Rosalie Harper (cousin on JoAnn Lentz), Donna Moseman, Tom (friend of Traci), Peter Kwong, Dirk Ficca, Neal Prochnow, Marjorie Faulks, David Lewis (friend of Jan Hansen), Jacob (son of Kurt and Jodi Helmrick), Tom (Lisa Plackner's dad), Deb Larson (Jen Meyer's mother)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our young people presenting the Children's Christmas Program this Sunday, that they may kindle joy in all of us
- For those attended the recent Inquirer's Class, that they may find a church home that nourishes them
- For Tim Bylander our fearless church snow plow person, may you receive our thanks and rest from sore muscles
- For our church musicians Marsha Pearson, Jamie Mills, Sarah Plum, Dave Reilly and others who are preparing for the Christmas services, may they bring the hope and joy of the Christian faith to us all
- For those who continue to support our church's ministry with their tithes, offerings and gifts--you are all a blessing

Prayers for our World:

- For the people of the southeast cleaning up and taking stock after devastating storms
- For those seeking to quickly identify the Omnicron variant and help us deal with it effectively, may God speed their work
- For all of us trying to live hopefully as the pandemic keeps going on and on, may God give us strength and wisdom
- For the gift of Advent, a time to wait and watch for the signs of God's presence all around us—may we pay attention
- For our stressed out world, may we find the peace of Christ and the joy of faith
- For the 13,000 Afghani refugees at Fort McCoy, WI, that they may be strengthened in their journey

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For Dave Mountain who is retiring as our church custodian after 15 years of ministry, may you be blessed with rest
- For Sarah Plum, our choir director, who received the 2022 Outstanding Young Choral Director Award for her work at RFHS, congratulations, we are proud of you!
- For our church children who again in worship this year tell us the good news of great joy for all people
- For Lydia Katherine Koecher who was baptized last Sunday that she may grow in faith and years
- For the birth of Thea Jane Querna born to Jenny and David Querna (and proud grandparents Wendy and John) 8 weeks early, mom is home, baby is still in hospital but doing well at 3 pounds and 16.5 inches long
- For the gift of the Giving Tree and the families it will bless
- For the Shoebox Ministry to the men at Kinnic Rehab, that it may kindle hope

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For Charles Hoffman (father of Jeff Hoffman) who died this past week, may his family be given strength and comfort
- For Luella, grandmother of Jamie Mills, and Josh Budensiek, nephew of Sheila Peterson, who died this past week, may they rest in God's strong arms
- For those mourning Jean Hagberg, Donnie Mertens, Judith Permann, Dorothy Friedl, Barb Wall, and Jeff Peterson, may you not mourn alone
- For the 800,000 Americans and over 5.3 million worldwide who have died of Covid, may they not have died in vain

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Micah 5:2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;
and he shall be the one of peace.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Dec 12, 2021</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 9,842	\$ 459,557
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 9,262	\$ 463,100

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

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.