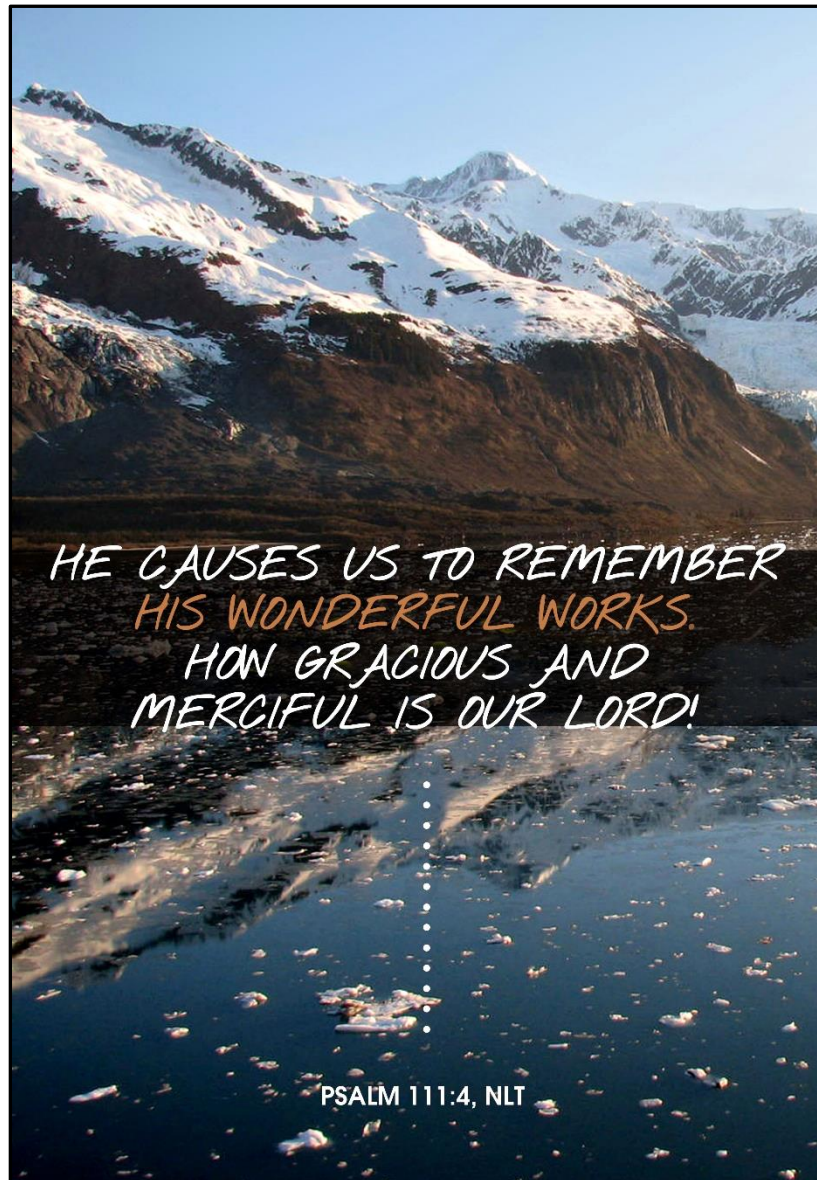


**First Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
River Falls, Wisconsin**

**January 28, 2024**



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

January 28, 2024

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

10:00 am

Gathering

*Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.*

*- Henri Nouwen*

*Healing yourself is connected with healing others.*

*- Yoko Ono*

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with us today! Join us for coffee in the Fellowship Hall following the worship service.

- The nursery is available for young children.
- Activity bags are available for children.
- Large print bulletins are available from the ushers.
- Please stand when noted by the \*
- Congregation responses are in bold.
- Please stop at the welcome station for a gift.

*No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!*

*As Jesus' courageous disciples, living God's grace, we strive to:*

- *Worship faithfully*
- *Welcome openly*
- *Grow spiritually*
- *Care passionately*
- *Serve generously*

**GATHERING MUSIC**

**WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

L: We gather as God's people:

**P: To seek direction in the living of our lives.**

L: We gather as God's people:

**P: To be still and hear what God would have us do.**

L: We gather as God's people:

**P: To be renewed, restored and recreated.**

L: We rejoice that we are God's people:

**P: To serve, to love and to sing God's praise.**

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

\*HYMN

*Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You*

#4

## \*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy and Loving God, anger is often our weak spot. It fuels our resentments. It prevents us from letting go. It feeds our self-righteousness. We cling to anger as if it could save us, hoping it will protect us from pain and loss. But, it is all folly. Salvation is in trusting you to make all things right. Hope is found in keeping our eyes on you and on what you have done for us, rather than on others and how they have let us down. Forgive our short-sighted and self-inflicted foolishness, Lord. Restore us in love and grace to trust you in all things. Amen.

## \*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

**L:** The power of Christ's liberating forgiveness sets us free from the anger and sin that beset us. So let us hear and live the good news:

**P:** **Jesus Christ frees you from all unrighteousness and makes you a new creation.**

**All:** **Thanks be to God!**

**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

Je - sus, name a-bove all names; beau-ti-ful Sav - ior, glo-ri-ous Lord.

Em - man-u-el, God is with us; blessed Re - deem-er, Liv - ing Word.

## Hearing the Word

## SCRIPTURE LESSON

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

## PSALM 111 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

**R** Man-y and great, O God, are your works, mak-er of Earth and sky

**L:** Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

**P:** **Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.**

- L: Full of honor and majesty is God's work, and his righteousness endures forever.
- P: God has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the LORD is gracious and merciful.**
- L: God provides food for those who trust him; he is ever mindful of his covenant.
- P: God has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.**
- L: The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.
- P: They are established for ever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.**
- L: The Lord sent redemption to his people; and has commanded his covenant forever.
- P: Holy and awesome is God's name.**
- L: The fear and trust of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.
- P: God's praise endures forever. R**

### **Celebrating the Meal**

(All Christians are welcome at the table of our Lord. The bread is gluten-free. Red wine and white grape juice are offered. Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.)

#### ***The Invitation to the Meal***

- L: Jesus healed people. They came to him looking for wholeness and healing. And he healed them in body, mind and spirit. We too need healing. We too need to be healed in body, mind and spirit. So come to the table of the Great Healer, the one who promises the bread of life, the cup of blessing and to those who allow him to lead them, abundant life.

#### ***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: It is right and good always to give thanks, ...

#### ***The Words of Institution***

- L: We praise your name as we proclaim 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 Be Bread**

*Congregation join on refrain:*

Refrain



Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord, bro-ken and shared,



life for the world. Let us be wine, love free-ly poured.



Let us be one in the Lord.

#### **Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks**

*Congregation join on refrain:*

Refrain



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, give



thanks to the ris - en Lord. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le -



lu - ia, give praise to his Name.

**I Come With Joy**

***I come with joy, a child of God, forgiven, loved, and free,  
The life of Jesus to recall, in love laid down for me,  
In love laid down for me.***

***I come with Christians far and near to find, as all are fed,  
The new community of love in Christ's communion bread,  
In Christ's communion bread.***

***As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share, each proud division ends.  
The love that made us, makes us one, and strangers now are friends,  
And strangers now are friends.***

***Together met, together bound, in friendship we will stay,  
And go with joy to love the world and live the way we pray,  
And live the way we pray.***

***Post-Communion Prayer***

**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.**

<b>Proclaiming the Word</b>
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**TIME WITH CHILDREN**

**Rev. Chris Myers**

**SONG (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)**

***We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,  
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,  
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored:  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,  
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.***

**GOSPEL LESSON**

**Mark 1:21-28**

**SERMON**

**Rev. Chris Myers**

\*HYMN

*Healer of Our Every Ill*

Refrain



Heal - er of our ev - 'ry ill, light of each to - mor - row,



give us peace be - yond our fear, and hope be - yond our sor - row.

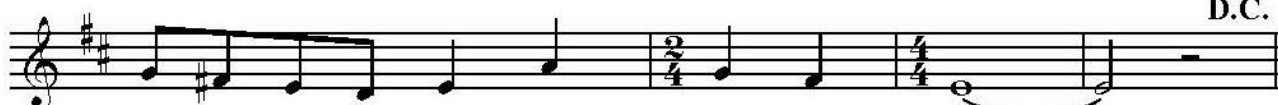
Verses



1. You who know our fears and sad - ness,
2. In the pain and joy be - hold - ing,
3. Give us strength to love each oth - er,
4. You who know each thought and feel - ing,



Grace us with your peace and glad - ness,  
How your grace is still un - fold - ing,  
Ev - 'ry sis - ter, ev - 'ry broth - er,  
Teach us all your way of heal - ing,



Spir - it of all com - fort: fill our hearts.  
Give us all your vi - sion: God of love.  
Spir - it of all kind - ness: be our guide.  
Spir - it of com - pas - sion: fill each heart.

**\*STATEMENT OF FAITH (taken from the New Zealand Church)**

You, O God, are supreme and holy. You create our world and give us life.  
Your purpose overarches everything we do. You have always been with us.  
You are God.

You, O God, are infinitely generous, good beyond all measure.  
You came to us before we came to you.

You have revealed and proved your love for us in Jesus Christ, who lived and died  
and rose again. You are with us now.

You are God.

You, O God, are Holy Spirit. You empower us to be your gospel in the world.  
You reconcile and hear; you overcome death. You are our God. We worship you.  
Amen.

**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.

**GATHERING OUR GIFTS**

*Here I Am Lord*  
*Arr. Mark Hayes*

**Chancel Choir**

**\*DOXOLOGY**



Let us bring ev - 'ry gift, let us trea - sure ev - 'ry grace: As you've

3



giv - en to us, let us share. In our neigh - bor to - day we will

6



meet you face to face, Let your love be the rule ev - 'ry - where.



## \*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Extravagant God, thank you for your blessings in our lives. We offer ourselves in grateful response, seeking to live with such compassion toward others that your blessings will flow through us to bless our community and our world. For the sake of Christ Jesus we pray. Amen.

## Sending

## \*HYMN

## *Praise to the Living God*

#8

## \*BLESSING

## POSTLUDE

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## Connecting Through Cooking

One of the ways we are trying to connect with each other this winter is through cooking. This past week Peter Kwong hosted a Chinese Cooking Class in our church kitchen. A second one will be this coming Tuesday. Peter will be back in February teaching Thai and Mexican Cooking. Look for a sign-up sheet to go out next week!



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**SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS**

Preacher: Chris Myers  
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers  
Cantor: David Reilly  
Liturgist: Carole Mottaz  
Deacons: Cindy Gandrud, Traci Hagberg,  
Lois Martin  
Organist: Marsha Pearson  
Nursery: Kahla Fuller  
Live Stream: Ryan Luedtke  
Trustee: Scott Elsesser  
Welcomers: Arlene Johnson, Julie Bauer  
Coffee  
Fellowship: Merry Widows – St. B's Donuts  
Counters: Allen Barnes, Trish Graves

**CHURCH STAFF**

Pastor: Christopher Myers  
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers  
Community &  
Outreach Pastor: Deb Meyer  
Youth Ministers: Alex Plum  
Music Coordinator &  
Bell Director: Jamie Mills  
Choir Director: Sarah Plum  
Organists: Terry Mithun,  
Marsha Pearson  
Building Manager: Timothy Bylander  
Church Moderator: Kathy Rausch  
Office Administrator: Missy Luedtke  
Nursery Attendant: Kahla Fuller  
Custodian: Farnum Fuller

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**Treasurer's Report**

	<b><u>Dec 31, 2023</u></b>
General Fund Income	\$ 528,071.20
General Fund Expenses	<u>\$ 527,945.35</u>
2023 Net Income	<u>\$ 125.85</u>
	<b><u>Jan 21, 2024</u></b>
General Fund Income*	<u>\$ 74,180.01</u>

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

\*Includes annual and monthly gifts.

A new budget will be approved at the Feb 4 Annual Meeting.

**Offering QR Code**

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

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

**Those who are ill or recovering:**

Dorothy Shavers, Onawa (granddaughter of Bobbie Kuhn), Carsten (grandson of Duane Church), Margo Bartness

**Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:**

- For our church leaders getting ready for the Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 4th, especially our Moderator Kathy Rausch and Vice Moderator Marie Roe, may you receive wisdom and guidance
- For our Spring Break Mission Team serving a Shrimp Boil in mid-March in the Fellowship Hall, may it be a fun time (watch for more information and buy tickets soon)
- For our Church Council as they begin reading the book *All The Lonely People*, that they may see ways we can creatively reach out with God's love to our community
- For those who received blood as part of the recent Blood Drive in our Fellowship Hall
- For those taking part in the new women's group led by Pastor Deb, may it connect us with God and one another

**Prayers for our World:**

- For our nation as it begins the long process of electing leaders in the fall, may we be given God's wisdom, strength and fortitude
- For civilians caught in bloody conflict in Israel and Gaza who are always the ones who suffer in times of war, may a new way forward be found to bring lasting peace
- For those leading and helping plan Earth Fest on April 20th at UWRF, may it drive home our need to be better stewards of God's gift of this good creation
- For those fighting cancer and those working to find a cure, may your efforts be fruitful

**Prayers of Thanksgiving:**

- For those who helped serve at the funeral lunches for Neal Prochnow and Dorothy Sorensen, you are angels, bless you
- For our custodian Farnum Fuller who has been putting in lots of hours getting our building ready for its many events, celebrations and recent funerals
- For those joining the two cooking classes led by Peter Kwong, may we be fed in body and soul
- For the gift of this congregation and its leaders as we gather for our Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 4
- For our choir as they participate in the It Takes a Village Choir Concert on Sunday, February 25 at 4pm which is back for the first time in many years

**For those grieving the loss of loved ones:**

- For the family of Neal Prochnow who died peacefully at home last week and whose Memorial Service was Friday, January 26 here at church, may he be given eternal rest and peace and his family comforted
- For the family of Dorothy Sorensen whose Memorial Service was Saturday, January 21 here at church, may she rest from her labors
- For the Krueger family mourning Bill, the Alexander family mourning Dick, the Carrison family mourning Dahn, the Johnson family mourning Steve, the Peterson family mourning Sheila, the Olson family mourning Bill, the Koosmann family mourning Sue, may you be strengthened through the care of others

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

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: Deuteronomy 18:15-20**

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: 'If I hear the voice of the LORD my God anymore, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.' Then the LORD replied to me: 'They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.'

**GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 1:21-28**

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.' At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.