

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

**February 18, 2024**



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

February 18, 2024

First Sunday in Lent

10:00 am

**Gathering**

*"Magic is based on the fact that people see only what they expect to see. Angels are those powerful people, experiences and spirits whom God sends into the world to wish us well. Since we don't expect to see them, we don't."*

*- Fredrick Buechner*

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:** Our Lenten journey has begun. Let us follow the example of Jesus who...

**P:** **Listened for the voice of God in the wilderness,**

**L:** Followed the leading of the Holy Spirit,

**P:** **And resisted temptation.**

**L:** Jesus is the Bread of Life.

**P:** **Let us feast on him during this Lenten season.**

**L:** Jesus is the hope of the world.

**P:** **Let us place our faith and truth in him.**

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

\*HYMN

*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

1 Praise to the Lord, the Al-might-y, the King of cre - a  
2 Praise to the Lord, a - bove all things so won-drous-ly reign -  
3 Praise to the Lord, who will pros-per your work and de - fend  
4 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me a - dore

tion! O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and sal -  
ing; shel-tering you un - der his wings, and so gent - ly sus -  
you: sure - ly his good - ness and mer - cy shall dai - ly at -  
him! All that has life and breath, come now with prais - es be -

va - tion! Come, all who hear; now to his  
tain - ing! Have you not seen all that is  
tend you. Pon - der a - new what the Al -  
fore him. Let the A - men sound from his

tem - ple draw near, join me in glad ad - o - ra - tion!  
need - ful has been sent by his gra - cious or - dain - ing?  
might - y can do, if with his love he be - friends you.  
peo - ple a - gain; glad - ly for - ev - er a - dore him.

## **\*PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

L: Lent is a time of reflection, preparation and repentance. As we fix our gaze upon Christ's example, let us examine ourselves and confess our sin before God and one another. Let us pray.

L: Merciful God, forgive us when we stray from your path and succumb to the temptation of the moment.

**P: Make us to know your ways, O Lord; teach us your path.**

L: Forgive us for failing to see every person as one of your beloved children.

**P: Make us to know your ways, O Lord; teach us your path.**

L: Forgive us when we fail to share from the resources we have, when others go hungry for lack of food, or have no place to rest.

**P: Make us to know your ways, O Lord; teach us your path.**

L: Forgive us when we hold onto our anger and hurts, failing to forgive as you have forgiven us.

**P: Make us to know your ways, O Lord; teach us your path.**

L: Forgive us when we forget to live our lives in a way that shows that you are our God and we are your people.

**P: Make us to know your ways, O Lord; teach us your path. Amen.**

## **\*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: This is the good news:

**P: God loves us just the way we are.**

L: This is the gospel of Jesus Christ:

**P: God loves us so much to leave us where we are.**

L: Friends let us live the gospel of Jesus Christ here and now. In Christ we are forgiven.

**P: 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



Glo - ri - a!      Glo - ri - a!      High - est glor - y to You! —————

Glo - ri - a!      Glo - ri - a!      High - est glor - y to You!

O - pen now our lips      and our mouths shall give praise.  
O Lord, rush to help      to de - liv - er Your world.  
Mak - er, Spir - it, Friend,      You are Great My - ster - y!

### Hearing the Word

#### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Genesis 9:8-17

PSALM 25:1-10 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

**R**      *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*

L: To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

**P: O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.**

L: Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

**P: Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.**

L: Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

**P: Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.**

L: Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

**P: Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.**

L: God leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

**P: All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees. 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 came to seek out the lost and lonely.

**P: Come Lord Jesus, come to us we pray.**

L: He came with healing in hands, love in his heart and peace in his wake.

**P: Come Holy Spirit, come to us we pray.**

L: He came proclaiming God's kingdom is coming and yet is also here among us.

**P: Come, Gracious God, come to us we pray.**

**All: Come let us be a part of God's Way here and now as we eat and drink at your table.**

### *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:

### How Beautiful – Jubilee Ringers

Arr. Bettcher

#### We Shall Overcome

1. We shall o - ver - come, we shall o - ver - come,

we shall o - ver - come some - day! Oh, deep in my

heart I do be - lieve we shall o - ver - come some - day!

2. We'll walk hand in hand.
3. We shall all be free.
4. We shall live in peace.
5. The Lord will see us through.

#### In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful

In the Lord I'll be ev - er thank - ful, in the Lord I will re - joice! Look to God, do not be a -

fraid; lift up your voic - es, the Lord is near; lift up your voic - es, the Lord is near. In the

## **Healer of Our Every Ill**

*Congregation join on refrain:*

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.

### ***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.

### **Proclaiming the Word**

**TIME WITH CHILDREN**

**Rev. Chris Myers**

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

*Jesus loves me! This I know, as he loved so long ago,  
Taking children on his knee, saying, "Let them come to me."*

*Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!*

*Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

**GOSPEL LESSON**

**Mark 1:9-15**

**SERMON**

**Rev. Chris Myers**

**\*HYMN**

***Lord Jesus, Who Through Forty Days***

**#211**

**\*STATEMENT OF FAITH** (from a morning prayer liturgy at Eastern Mennonite Seminary)

**We believe in God:**

**Whose love is the source of all life and the desire of our lives,**

**Whose love was given a human face in Jesus of Nazareth,**

**Whose love was crucified by the evil that waits to enslave us all,**

**And whose love, defeating even death, is our glorious promise of  
freedom.**



Therefore, though we are sometimes fearful and full of doubt, in God we trust; And in the name of Jesus Christ, we commit ourselves in the service of others,  
 To seek justice and to live in peace,  
 To care for the earth and to share the commonwealth of God's goodness,  
 To live in the freedom of forgiveness and the power of the spirit of love,  
 and in the company of the faithful, so to be the church for the glory of God. 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**

*Over the Rainbow*

**Jubilee Ringers**

**\*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 (words taken from a prayer of Mother Teresa 1910-1997)**

Lord, here I am, body, heart and soul. Grant that with your love, I may be big enough to reach the world, and small enough to be at one with you. Bless us and the gifts we offer this day. In the name and mission of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Sending

**\*HYMN**

***Love Divine, All Loves Excelling***

**#43**

**\*BLESSING**

**POSTLUDE**

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### **SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS**

Preacher: Chris Myers  
Celebrant: Chris Myers  
Cantor: David Reilly  
Liturgist: Sue Danielson  
Deacons: Karen Lloyd, Laura Anderson,  
Lance Lueck, Suzanne Hagen  
Organist: Terry Mithun  
Nursery: Kahla Fuller  
Live Stream: Laura Miller  
Trustee: Jeff Hoffman  
Welcomers: Dennis and Lynn Linder  
Coffee

Fellowship: Congregational Croissants  
Counters: Diane Welsh, Dennis Linder  
*Altar table flowers are to honor Arlene Johnson who saved my life last month. And to thank all who kept me in prayer and sent well wishes, flowers and cards. I am very grateful.*  
*Margo Bartness*

### **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**

	<u>Feb 11, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 9,245	\$ 96,334
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 62,778

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

\*Includes annual and monthly gifts.



### **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, Art Rice, Sue Taylor, Becca (daughter of Lou Greub), Jeff Jorae (son of Raelle), Traci Hagberg

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

- For our Spring Break Mission Team serving a Shrimp Boil on Wednesday March 13 (new date!) in the Fellowship Hall from 5:15 to 6:30pm, may it be a fun time (and buy tickets!)
- For those cooking, serving and cleaning up after the Wednesday Night Family Meals, thank you!
- 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 ministry 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 20 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 the return of our Wednesday Night Family Meals!
- For Barb de Souza, our retired health care missionary living in the slums of Rio de Janeiro who continues to fight the good fight for healthcare and women's rights in Brazil.
- For those getting sick with the latest wave of Covid and Flu, stay home, rest, get better and reach out to the church office if you need any help
- For those joining the last cooking class led by Peter Kwong on Tuesday, February 27, may we be fed in body and soul
- For our deacons, pastors and musicians gearing up for our Lenten Prayer Around the Cross worship services, may they kindle renewal, grace and hope in us all
- 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 Prochnow family mourning Neal, the Sorensen family mourning Dorothy, the Krueger family mourning Bill, the Alexander family mourning Dick, the Carrison family mourning Dahn (whose service will be this spring), 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: Genesis 9:8-17**

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

**GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 1:9-15**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

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Yacouba Sawadogo, Burkina Faso, The Man Who Stopped the Desert

