

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

February 25, 2024



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

February 25, 2024

Second Sunday in Lent

10:00 am

Gathering

“We do not have individual crosses to bear, but instead, we all bear the same customized cross of Jesus. And his cross is this: dying to self so that we can live life with a basic way toward others, toward service, toward living out and proclaiming the better path of the gospel in every way we can.”

- Kelly Van

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: Lent is a homecoming.

P: Home from weary years,

L: Home to calm our fears,

P: Home to dry our tears.

L: Lent is a homecoming.

P: Home to remember our name,

L: Home to a warm embrace,

P: Home to a hopeful place.

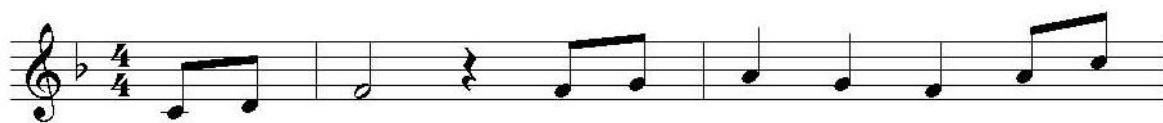
L: Home with Christ, who is one with us in our journeying.

P: Home with the Holy Spirit, who gives us strength and courage.

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

*HYMN

Let Us Go to the House of the Lord



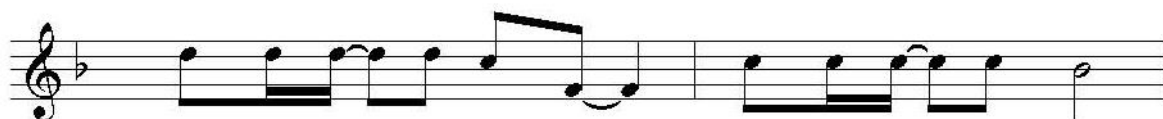
I was glad when they said to me, "Let us



go to the house of the Lord." I was glad when they



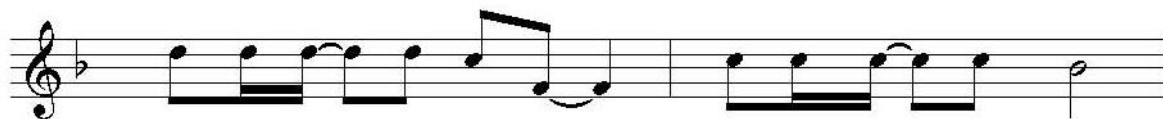
said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."



Called from ev - 'ry na - tion, called from ev - 'ry race,
Here the poor are wel - comed, here the lost are claimed,
Words that must be spo - ken, grace that must be heard,



gath - ered here for wor - ship in this ho - ly place;
Bro - ken lives are mend - ed, deep - est fears are named;
Mer - cy and for - give - ness from God's ho - ly Word,



God is here a - mong us, lift your hearts and sing,
Here the wise are child - ren and the weak are strong,
Here, will be re - peat - ed; Peace! to all pro - claimed,



make the walls and raf - ters ring.
Here, in Christ, we all be - long.
Shout - ed out in Je - sus' name.

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Loving God, it is difficult at times for us to fully comprehend the story of Jesus. The story of his suffering is raw and discomfoting. We would rather leap to the joyous wonder of Easter than travel the solemn days of Lent. Like Peter, we would prefer a triumphant Messiah who would make everything right. We're not quite sure what to make of this Jesus who goes to a brutal death on the cross. O God, help us to understand, help us to faithfully understand. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: The God of Jesus Christ knows our weaknesses and stands beside us in our struggles.

P: God beside us. God before us. God behind us. God with us.

L: If we truly seek God's way, we are forgiven. Even in our weakness and wandering, God freely provides forgiveness.

P: God accepts us. God embraces us. God gives us strength for our life journey

L: Be assured that God is with us every moment, guiding, forgiving, and renewing us.

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**

Love is flowing: love is flowing, love is flowing from the fountain of life;

Love is flowing: love is flowing, love is flowing from the fountain of life.

Grace is flooding: grace is flooding, grace is flooding from the fountain of life.

Grace is flooding: grace is flooding, grace is flooding from the fountain of life.

BAPTISM OF HOPE TYLER WITHERS

Welcome and Presentation

L: They were bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant, and said to them.

P: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

L: Members and friends in Christ, we gather to celebrate God's gift of grace in the baptism of Hope Tyler Withers. To us a child is given!

P: Thanks be to God!

Address

- L: Baptism is the sacrament through which we are united to Jesus Christ and given a part in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. Baptism is the visible sign of an invisible event, the reconciliation of people to God. It shows the death of self and the rising to a life of obedience and praise. It shows also the pouring out of the Spirit on those whom God has chosen. In baptism, God works in us the power of forgiveness, the renewal of the Spirit, and the knowledge of the call to be a part of God's people.
- P: This is the water of baptism. Out of this water, we rise with new life, forgiven of sin and one in Christ, members of Christ's body.**

Questions

- L: As parents and sponsors of this child, will you encourage her to renounce the powers of evil and to receive the freedom of new life in Christ?

Parents and Sponsors: We will, with the help of God.

- L: Will you teach her that she may be led to profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by sharing with her the church's life, worship, and fellowship?

Parents and Sponsors: We will, with the help of God.

- L: Christ will first be known to Hope by the Christ seen in your homes. By the grace of God, will you model the Christian life for her, provide instruction in the Christian faith, and live with her in the covenant of baptism so that she may lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ?

Parents and Sponsors: We will, with the help of God.

- L: Will you, the children of First Congregational United Church of Christ, welcome Hope into the life of the church? Will you learn, play, and explore God's world with her?

Children: We will, with the help of God.

- L: Jesus calls us to make disciples of all nations and to offer them the gift of grace in baptism. Will you who witness and celebrate this sacrament, nurture one another in the Christian faith and include Hope in your love and prayer?

P: We promise our love and prayer.

Act of Baptism

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Let us pray. Gracious God, bless this water. By your Holy Spirit save those who confess the name of Jesus Christ that sin may have no power over them. Create new life in your servant Hope who will be baptized this day, that she too may rise with Christ. Glory to you, Eternal God, the one who was, and is, and shall always be, world without end. Amen.

I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit be upon you, Hope, child of God, disciple of Christ, member of the church.

Baptismal Song

Child of Blessing, Child of Promise

***Child of blessing, child of promise, baptized with the Spirit's sign;
with this water God has sealed you unto love and grace divine.***

***Child of God your loving Parent, learn to know whose child you are.
Grow to laugh and sing and worship, trust and love God more than all.***

Prayer

L: Let us pray. We give you thanks, O God, for this child and the grace acknowledged here in water and the Spirit. Embrace us all as sons and daughters in the one household of your love. Grant us grace to receive and nurture this new member of the body of Christ.

P: **Give to the newly baptized: strength for life's journey, courage in time of suffering, the joy of faith, the freedom of love, and the hope of new life; through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.**

Name: Hope Tyler Withers

Born: September 19, 2023

Baptized: February 25, 2024

Hope's parents are Erik and Vanessa Withers

**Hope's godparents are Renee Bley and the Cudd Street Boys: Phillip Galli,
Leland Lueck, Lance Lueck, Tony Matter, and Adam Villeneuve**

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

PSALM 22:23-26 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R *Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's holy name.
Bless the Lord, my soul, and who leads me into life.*

L: You who revere God, praise the Lord! You descendants of Jacob, honor your God!

P: **All Israel, stand in awe of the Holy One! For God does not scorn the downtrodden, nor shrink in loathing from their plight.**

L: God does not hide from them, but answers when they call for help.

P: **From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will fulfill before those who revere the Holy One.**

L: The poor will eat and be satisfied. Those who seek our God will offer their praises.

P: **May their hearts live 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: This is the table, not of the church, but of our Lord. It is to be made ready for those who love him and those who want to love him more. So come, you who have much faith, and you who have little. Come, you who have been here often and you who have not been for a long time. Come, you who have tried to follow and you who have failed. Come not because it is I who invites you, come for it is God's desire that we should meet here.

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:

Gather Your People

Congregation join on refrain:

The musical score is written on three staves in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "Gath-er your peo-ple, O Lord. Gath-er your peo-ple, O Lord. One bread, one bod-y, one spir-it of love. Gath-er your peo-ple, O Lord." The score includes various musical notations such as quarter notes, eighth notes, and rests.

You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

Refrain



You sat - is - fy the hun - gry heart With



gift of fin - est wheat; Come give to us, O



sav - ing Lord, The bread of life to eat.

Verses



1. As when the shep - herd calls his sheep, They
2. With joy - ful lips we sing to you Our
3. Is not the cup we bless and share The
4. The mys - t'ry of your pres - ence, Lord, No
5. You give your - self to us, O Lord; Then



know and heed his voice; So when you call your
praise and grat - i - tude, That you should count us
blood of Christ out-poured? Do not one cup, one
mor - tal tongue can tell: Whom all the world can -
self - less let us be, To serve each oth - er



fam - 'ly, Lord, We fol - low and re - joice.
wor - thy, Lord, To share this heav'n - ly food.
loaf, de - clare Our one - ness in the Lord?
not con - tain Comes in our hearts to dwell.
in your name In truth and char - i - ty.

D.C.

This is the Body of Christ

***This is the body of Christ, broken that we may be whole;
This cup, as promised by God, true to his word, cradles our Lord;
Food for the good of the soul.***

Breathe on Me Breath of God

***Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew
That I may love the way you love and do what you would do.***

***Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,
Until with you I will one will, to do and to endure.***

***Breathe on me, Breath of God, stir in me one desire:
That every earthly part of me may glow with holy fire.***

***Breath on me, Breath of God, so shall I never die,
But live with you the perfect life of your eternity.***

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.)

***Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.
Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory.
Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory;
Children of the Lord.***

GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 8:31-8

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

The Summons

Verses 1, 2, and 5



1. Will you come and fol - low me If I but
 2. Will you leave your - self be - hind If I but
 3. Will you let the blind - ed see If I but
 4. Will you love the 'you' you hide If I but
 5. Lord, your sum - mons ech - oes true When you but



call your name? Will you go where you don't
 call your name? Will you care for cruel and
 call your name? Will you set the pris - 'ners
 call your name? Will you quell the fear in -
 call my name. Let me turn and fol - low



know And nev - er be the same? Will you
 kind And nev - er be the same? Will you
 free And nev - er be the same? Will you
 side And nev - er be the same? Will you
 you And nev - er be the same. In your



let my love be shown, Will you let my
 risk the hos - tile stare Should your life at -
 kiss the lep - er clean, And do such as
 use the faith you've found To re - shape the
 com - pa - ny I'll go Where your love and



name be known, Will you let my life be
 tract or scare? Will you let me an - swer
 this un - seen, And ad - mit to what I
 world a - round, Through my sight and touch and
 foot - steps show. Thus I'll move and live and



grown In you and you in me?
 pray'r In you and you in me?
 mean In you and you in me?
 sound In you and you in me?
 grow In you and you in me.

***STATEMENT OF FAITH (World Council of Churches)**

I believe in the living God, the Maker of all humankind who creates and sustains the universe in power and in love.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God incarnate on earth, who showed us by his words and work, suffering with others, conquest of death, what human life ought to be and what God is like.

I believe that the Spirit of God is present with us now and always, and can be experienced in prayer, in forgiveness, in the Word, the Sacraments, the community of the Church and all that we do. 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

Time for Turning
Arr. Craig Courtney

Chancel Choir

***DOXOLOGY**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Creator God, in Jesus Christ you came among us. You taught us how to live in your way. You gave to us the fullness of life. You showed us how to give of ourselves that others also might know your gift of life. For all your goodness, God, we give you thanks. We give you these gifts. For all your goodness, God, we give you our lives. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

#42

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Traci Hagberg
Deacons: Cindy Gandrud, Lance Lueck,
Brian Miller, Karen Lloyd,
Lois Martin
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Steve Koecher
Welcomers: Norma Revels, Julie Bauer
Coffee
Fellowship: Merry Widows and the
Withers Family
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

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Feb 18, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 19,001	\$ 130,887
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 73,241

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'

Join us for Wednesday Meals and Worship



Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Dorothy Shavers, Carsten (grandson of Duane Church), Sarah, Art Rice, Sue Taylor, Jeff Jorae (son of Raelle), Anna

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 5:15-6:30pm, may it be a fun time (and buy tickets ahead of time!)
- For those joining the last cooking class led by Peter Kwong, may we be fed in body and soul
- For the return of our Wednesday Night Family Meals!
- For our deacons and pastors gearing up for our Lenten Prayer Around the Cross worship services, may they kindle renewal, grace and hope in us all

Prayers for our World:

- For the police and EMTs killed in a senseless tragedy this past Sunday in Burnsville, that their families may be comforted and we may end this madness
- 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 our baptism boom including Hope Withers (Erik and Vanessa) to be baptized February 25, Laney Sitz (Heather and Dan) to be baptized on March 3 and Nora Koecher (Dan and Mari) to be baptized on March 10, may they all grow in love and faith!
- For the gift of the over 20,000 meals packed by our FMSC crews this past fall which have just arrived in Columbia, may they feed God's beloved children
- For Jenna Lawrence who heads to the state wrestling tournament in Madison this weekend, go Wildcats!
- 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.

Things Jesus Taught Me...

Faith does not provide a meal, prevent an illness, or protect from a storm. Faith does promise that in hunger, illness, and fear, I am NOT ALONE.

All people are important. My job is to help.

Compassion, patience.

To look in the eyes of anybody I meet and to let them know that they matter.

Forgiveness.

Everyone is our neighbor.

Prejudice is not in Jesus' vocabulary.

Truth is unbelievably powerful.

I'm supposed to love myself, so that I can love others and my Creator. I do that by following Jesus' wisdom, given in the Ten Commandments (make Sabbath, don't lie to myself or look with murderous rage, do not compare) and his on-going affirmation that our faith heals.

Be patient!

Love my neighbor and myself.

Forgiveness is not easy, however once forgiveness is given, life is made easy.

Don't be afraid. Jesus is with me to the close of the age!

Treat others the way you would want to be treated.

When you treat someone else poorly, you're also treating Jesus poorly.

It's okay to disagree with another, but you should still be kind.

To be kind to others, helpful to others, not judge others.

Love yourself and others.

Grace, gentleness, patience, presence.

To be caring to people who I don't agree with.

Love unconditionally, forgive, give thanks, see beauty

Love is more important than anything else.

Acceptance and forgiveness.

To love God, love your neighbor and love yourself.

To care for others before myself.

Hope for tomorrow.

To serve others with love and respect.

Be a servant. Forgive. Love your enemy.

Peace begins with me.

(Your responses from a recent sermon: Things Jesus Taught Me)

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.'

God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.'

GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 8:31-38

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'