

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

March 3, 2024



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

March 3, 2024

Third Sunday in Lent

10:00 am

Gathering

"It isn't Narnia, you know," sobbed Lucy. "It's you. We shan't meet you there.

And how can we live, never meeting you?"

"But you shall meet me, dear one," said Aslan.

"Are -are you there too, Sir?" said Edmund.

"I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name.

This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."

- C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

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: Let us be like the heavens and shout forth the glory of God!

P: Everything in creation proclaims that God has been at work.

L: Let our lives, too, proclaim that God has been at work in us.

P: For God revives us, gives us wisdom, enlightens us, and gives us joy.

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

***HYMN**

I Sing the Almighty Power of God

Blue #31

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious God, **the story of Jesus' outburst in the temple strikes a nerve with us. We confess that too often we do not treat your space or your time as sacred. We do not keep the Sabbath. We count our money when we should be counting our blessings. We fill our lives to the brim with activity and noise, stifling any opportunity to share even a moment with you. Even here in your house, we are preoccupied with our busyness and stress, rather than focusing on you. Forgive us, merciful God. Reorient us, O God. Help us to learn and trust from you. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Brothers and sisters in Christ, as surely as Jesus cleansed the temple, he cleanses our hearts and minds.

P: **Let us receive his gracious gift of pardon and live as loved and redeemed children of God. 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 (Sung twice)

A - men sing prais-es to the Lord A - men sing prais-es to the Lord

The first system of the musical score is in 4/4 time. The treble clef staff contains the melody with lyrics: "A - men sing prais-es to the Lord A - men sing prais-es to the Lord". The bass clef staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

A - men re-joice A - men re-joice A - men sing prais-es to the Lord

5

The second system of the musical score continues from measure 5. The treble clef staff contains the melody with lyrics: "A - men re-joice A - men re-joice A - men sing prais-es to the Lord". The bass clef staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the system.

BAPTISM OF LANEY KATHERINE SITZ

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 Laney Katherine Sitz. 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 Laney by the Christ seen in your home. 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 Laney 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 Laney 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 Laney 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, Laney, 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: Laney Katherine Sitz

Born: March 7, 2023

Baptized: March 3, 2024

Laney's parents are Daniel and Heather Sitz

Laney's sponsors are Sara and Luke Wagner and Angie and Ben Schott

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 56:1-8

PSALM 19:1-10 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R

God has made me glad, God has made me glad, I
will re-joyce, for God has made me glad.

- L:** The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.
- P:** **Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.**
- L:** There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
- P:** **In the heavens God has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. R**
- L:** Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hidden from its heat.
- P:** **The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;**
- L:** The commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
- P:** **More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. 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:** Come people of God, let us sing!
- P:** **Let us sing for we are God's people and God has done wonderful things.**

L: Let us come into God's presence with joy and thanksgiving.

P: Let us come into God's presence and let God feed us on the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing. Come Holy Spirit, come!

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:

We Are Called

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain



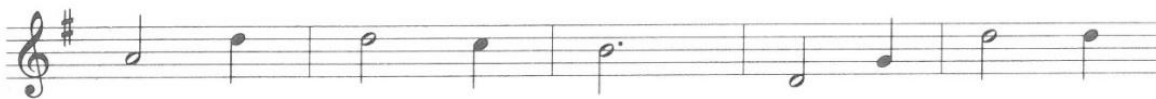
Sing a New Song

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain



Sing a new song un - to the Lord; let your song be



sung from moun - tains high. Sing a new song



un - to the Lord, sing - ing al - le - lu - ia.

Be Thou My Vision

*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art –
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

*Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
Thou my redeemer, my love thou hast won,
Thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.*

*Great God of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.*

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.)

*He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the whole wide world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands.*

GOSPEL LESSON

John 2:13-22

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Rain Down

Blue #444

***STATEMENT OF FAITH** – from the Iona Ecumenical Community in Scotland

L: Let us affirm our faith.

P: **We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of the One God, maker and sustainer of earth, sea and sky. Born of Mary, faithful to the God of Abraham and Sarah, Jesus healed the sick, served the poor, and proclaimed heaven on earth. Condemned by the religious, crucified by the state, He died but transformed even death and rose to life everlasting. He blessed the disciples with his Holy Spirit and sent them forth, east and west, north and south. We commit ourselves to Jesus, to one another as brothers and sisters and to the grace of the Holy Spirit. 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

Peace for the Journey
Arr. Joseph Martin

Chancel Choir

***DOXOLOGY**

*Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father, there is no shadow of
turning with thee; thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.*

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by morning
new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of Extravagant Love, **fill our spirits with your love and place upon our hearts your call to serve all in the name of Christ. We ask that you dedicate our gifts and our lives to faithful service and ministry. Amen.**

Sending

*HYMN

Soon and Very Soon

Blue #523

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Larissa Lueck
Deacons: Lance Lueck, Laura Anderson,
Karen Lloyd, Cindy Gandrud,
Marshall Skule
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Ryan Luedtke
Trustee: Jon Paul Okal
Welcomers: Larissa Lueck, Norma Revels
Coffee
Fellowship: Darlene Sumption
Counters: Jane Truesdill, Marie Roe
Altar table flowers are given by Maxine Sitz in celebration of Laney Sitz's Baptism.

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 25, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,204	\$ 134,079
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 83,704

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'. You will have to create an account.

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, Traci Hagberg, Harold Fosmo

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For the gift of our new hymnals, may they help us to sing God's praise and work in our time
- For our Spring Break Mission Team serving a Shrimp Boil on Wednesday, March 13 in the Fellowship Hall from 5:15-6:30 pm, may it be a fun time (and buy tickets ahead of time!)
- For all those who participated in our Connecting Through Cooking classes with Peter Kwong in our church kitchen, they were awesome!
- For our Relay for Life Team who fed us this past Wednesday with 9 different kinds of soup, it was delicious!
- For our deacons and pastors preparing 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 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 the safe arrival of Tova Nancy Thompson born to Mikayla and Kris on Tuesday (a healthy 8lbs 9 oz), may she be welcomed by three older siblings and her church family
- For our baptism boom including Hope Withers (Erik and Vanessa) 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 our amazing choir who participated in the It Takes a Village Choir Concert on February 25th which raised over \$19,000 for the village in Haiti supported by River Falls area churches

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: Isaiah 56:1-8

Thus says the LORD: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil.

Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say, 'The LORD will surely separate me from his people'; and do not let the eunuch say, 'I am just a dry tree.' For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him,

'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

