

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

March 10, 2024



SUNDAY

IN LENT

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

March 10, 2024

Fourth Sunday in Lent

10:00 am

Gathering

*Faith is the first factor in a life devoted to service.
Without it, nothing is possible.
With it, nothing is impossible.
- Mary McLeod Bethune*

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

Ah, Holy Jesus
Arr. Highben, Trans. J. Mills

Trombone Quartet

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: God so loved the world...

P: That God gave us light.

L: God so loved the world...

P: That God gave us God's son.

L: God so loved the world...

P: That God gave us eternal life.

L: Come let us follow...

P: As God leads us into abundant life here and now!

***HYMN**

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Verses 1, 2 and 4

Blue #358

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Loving God, **forgive those things we have done which have caused hurt and sadness. And forgive those things we should have done that would have brought love and life to others. In both we have failed ourselves and you. Bring us back to that place where our journey began, when we said that we would follow the way of life that you set out for us. Lead us through Lent and all our days on the life-journey to the Cross. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: Most Holy God, you have touched the dry bones of our faith and brought them to life.

P: Your Word has breathed new life where there was death.

L: Your Spirit raised us up from where we lay, down and out and wondering how we might move forward once again.

P: Your love sustains us and brings us home to you.

L: And by your grace we stand forgiven! May God bless us and keep us always, a forgiven people!

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**

Glory, glory hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down.

Glory, glory hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down.

I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down.

I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down.

BAPTISM OF NORA JEAN KOECHER

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 Nora Jean Koecher. 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 Nora 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 Nora 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 Nora 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 Nora 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, Nora, 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: Nora Jean Koecher

Born: December 8, 2023

Baptized: March 10, 2024

Nora's parents are Dan and Mari Koecher

Nora's sponsors are Alyssa and Ben Diestelmeier

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Numbers 21:4-9

PSALM 107:1-9 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R

Lift ev - ery voice and sing, till earth and heav - en

ring. Let them re - sound loud as the roll - ing sea.

- L: O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.
- P: Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those God redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.**
- L: Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.
- P: Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and God delivered them from their distress; God led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town.**
- L: Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for God's wonderful works to humankind.
- P: For God satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry God fills with good things. 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: Beloved in Christ, this is the joyful feast of the people of God!
- P: Come let us gather to celebrate a feast for all time.**
- L: Come let us join with Jesus and his disciples in an upper room.
- P: Come let us join the saints of all ages who have come in faith all along the way.**
- L: Come let us let God feed us with the bread of life and be sent with the power of the Holy Spirit to be the body of Christ for the world.

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:

Prayer for Ukraine – Trombone Quartet

By Lysenko

Locus Iste – Trombone Quartet

By Bruckner, Arr. R. Sauer

Lead Me, Guide Me

Congregation join on refrain:

***Lead me, guide me, along the way,
For if you lead me, I cannot stray.
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.
Lead me, oh Lord, lead me.***

How Great Thou Art

Congregation join on refrain:

***Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee;
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!***

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

John 3:14-21

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

The Gift of Love

Blue #397

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.

COMMISSIONING of Back Bay Mission Participants

Rene Bylander, Tim Bylander, Jamie Follstad, Steve Koecher, Carol Merriman,
Alex Plum, Norma Revels, Marie Roe, Dan Rude, Josh Sippel, John Sullivan,
Jennifer Syverson, Theo Syverson

L: All who take upon themselves the name of Christ are called into ministries of love and service by the example of Christ. As these members of our community begin their work among the people of Biloxi, we pray the blessings of God and this community upon their endeavors.

P: **We recognize you as ambassadors of this congregation in ministry with Back Bay Mission and dedicate you to service in the name of Jesus Christ. Through our prayers we will be united with you in your work. May God richly bless your labors.**

L: Let us affirm our belief in the responsibilities of Christian service.

All: We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God's gifts. We commit ourselves to the dignity of all persons and to the improvement of the quality of life for all God's people. We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world and to the rule of justice among all peoples. We believe in the present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs, and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world. Amen.

MISSION MOMENT

Andrew Blakely, Church World Service

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

Vexilla Regis
By Bruckner, Arr. R. Sauer

Trombone Quartet

***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**

Loving God, you have richly and deeply blessed us with abundant life. All the gifts we enjoy are from you. This world that you so love, the whole of creation, every thing that ever was and ever will be—are from you. And you have given us the gift of Jesus Christ. We give you these gifts and our lives, O God, with great thanksgiving. Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Blue #440

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

Achieved is the Glorious Work
By Haydn

Trombone Quartet

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
 Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
 Cantor: David Reilly
 Liturgist: Marie Roe
 Deacons: Brian Miller, Cindy Gandrud,
 Karen Lloyd, Suzanne Hagen,
 Jena Most

Trombone
 Quartet: Ben Allen, Rick Gaynor,
 Chris Lecher, Tim Mills

Organist: Marsha Pearson
 Nursery: Kahla Fuller
 Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
 Trustee: Dan Rude
 Welcomers: Bob and Janet Johnson
 Coffee
 Fellowship: Deb Meyer
 Counters: Trish Graves, Allen Barnes

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Christopher Myers
 Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers
 Community &
 Outreach Pastor: Deb Meyer
 Youth Minister: 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>Mar 3, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 10,633	\$ 141,124
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 94,167

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), Art Rice, Sue Taylor, Jeff Jorae (son of Raelle), Judy (mother of Lara Koecher), Woods (grandson of Bobbie)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For Nora Jean Koecher as she is baptized this Sunday, that she may grow in faith and wisdom and her parents Mari and Dan, and grandparents Lara and Steve may grow in strength and courage
- 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 being dedicated today and serving a Shrimp Boil on Wednesday, March 13 in the Fellowship Hall from 5:15-6:30pm, may it be a fun time (and buy tickets ahead of time!)
- For our choir gearing up for their annual Good Friday Cantata, may they be given strength and clear voices!
- For our Relay for Life Team who fed us recently with 9 different kinds of soup, it was delicious and over \$800 was raised to help fight cancer
- For our deacons, pastors and musicians gearing up for Holy Week, may they kindle renewal, grace, and hope in us all

Prayers for our World:

- For the two police officers and one EMT who were killed in a senseless act recently, may their families be comforted and our hardened hearts change
- For victims of domestic violence, may they find allies and may the work for justice continue
- 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

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For our Spring Break Mission Team headed to Back Bay next week, may they do good work and come home tired, but filled in body, mind and spirit
- For Shrimp Fest our Shrimp Boil being served this Wednesday by our Spring Break Mission Team, buy your ticket today!
- For the safe arrival of Tova Nancy Thompson born to Mikayla and Kris (a healthy 8 lbs 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 25th, Laney Sitz (Heather and Dan) baptized on March 3rd and Nora Koecher (Dan and Mari) to be baptized on March 10th, 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 family of Bill Rausch, father of our moderator Kathy Rausch, who died this last weekend and whose funeral is Saturday, March 9 in Waseca, may his family be comforted
- For the family of Harold Fosmo who died this past week and whose funeral will be at Bakken and Young on Thursday, March 14 at 2pm, may his wife Connie and daughters Cori and Vicki be comforted
- 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: Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.' Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.' So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, 'Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.' So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone (whosoever) who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.'