

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

**September 8, 2024**



**September 8 – Love Your Neighbors**

**September 15 – Forgive Others (and Yourself)**

**September 22 – Heal Division**

**September 29 – Bring Justice**

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

September 8, 2024

*Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost*

10:00 am

**Gathering**

The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies;  
probably because they are generally the same people.

- Gilbert K. Chesterton

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with  
us today!

- 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.
- Please note our worship service is livestreamed.

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

People of the Way

- September 8 – Love Your Neighbors
- September 15 – Forgive Others (and Yourself)
- September 22 – Heal Division
- September 29 – Bring Justice

**GATHERING MUSIC**

**WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

L: God is calling you today.

**P: God is calling us today.**

L: What is God calling us to be?

**P: To be the church. People united by God in faith.**

L: Why would God do such a thing?

**P: Because God has given us gifts to share, so that when we all come together, we  
can be the body of Christ for the world.**

L: So what should we do together as the body of Christ?

**P: Worship, serve, forgive, teach, welcome, but most of all love in the way Jesus  
loves.**

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

*All Are Welcome*  
(Verses 1, 2, 3 and 5)



1. Let us build a house where love can dwell And  
2. Let us build a house where proph - ets speak, And  
3. Let us build a house where love is found In  
4. Let us build a house where hands will reach Be -  
5. Let us build a house where all are named, Their



all can safe - ly live, A place where saints and  
words are strong and true, Where all God's chil - dren  
wa - ter, wine and wheat: A ban - quet hall on  
yond the wood and stone To heal and strength - en,  
songs and vi - sions heard And loved and treas - ured,



chil - dren tell How hearts learn to for -  
dare to seek To dream God's reign a -  
ho - ly ground, Where peace and jus - tice  
serve and teach, And live the Word they've  
taught and claimed As words with - in the



give. Built of hopes and dreams and vi - sions,  
new. Here the cross shall stand as wit - ness  
meet. Here the love of God, through Je - sus,  
known. Here the out - cast and the stran - ger  
Word. Built of tears and cries and laugh - ter,



Rock of faith and vault of grace; Here the  
And as sym - bol of God's grace; Here as  
Is re - vealed in time and space; As we  
Bear the im - age of God's face; Let us  
Prayers of faith and songs of grace, Let this



love of Christ shall end di - vi - sions:  
one we claim the faith of Je - sus:  
share in Christ the feast that frees us: All are wel - come,  
bring an end to fear and dan - ger:  
house pro - claim from floor to raft - er:



all are wel - come, all are wel - come in this place.

## \*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Our faith calls us to live our lives courageously and with love. For the times when we have been less faithful disciples, let us now pray:

P: **Merciful God, help us to be more loving in our daily living. If we have been impatient with others, grant us your patience. If we have been unkind in our actions, grant us Christ's love. And if we have been stressed out by the trials of daily living, grant us your peace. Amen.**

## \*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Our God is a God of love and mercy,

P: **Who allows us always to begin again.**

L: By God's grace, we are forgiven to walk in newness of life.

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 (Sung twice)

*Amen*

*Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen*

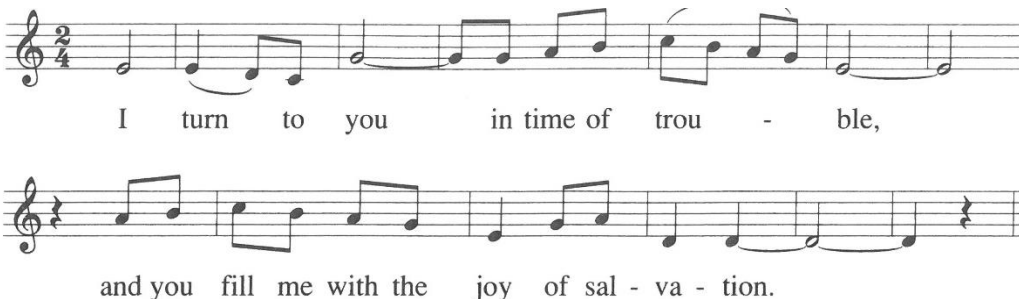
## Hearing the Word

## SCRIPTURE LESSON

Matthew 22:34-40

PSALM 116:1-9 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

**R**



I turn to you in time of trou - ble,

and you fill me with the joy of sal - va - tion.

L: Holy God, I love you! You heard my heartfelt plea!

P: **Your ear attended when I cried out: "Death's cords have bound me fast; the horrors of the grave have seized me. I feel only grief and pain."**

L: In the name of the Holy Lord I cried out, "Save, O save my very life."

P: **God is just and gracious, full of mercy, guarding the innocent, saving me from utter despair.**

L: Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Holy Lord has been wonderful, delivering me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

P: **I can walk before God among the living. 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 remember the mystery of faith...

All: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

### *Prayer of Consecration*

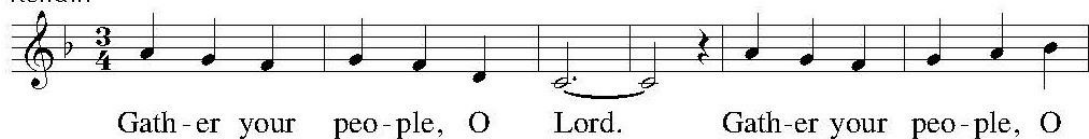
### *Distribution of the Elements*

*Hymns during the distribution of the elements:*

### *Gather Your People*

*Congregation join on refrain:*

Refrain



## Blest Are They

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain

The musical notation is for a refrain in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of three staves. The first staff starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a tempo marking 'All'. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), G3 (quarter). Chords above are C, D7, G, D, Em, G, C, G. The second staff continues with notes: G3 (quarter), F#3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), D3 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), F#2 (quarter), E2 (quarter), D2 (quarter), C2 (quarter). Chords above are Am, A, D, C, D7, Em, Em7. The third staff continues with notes: G2 (quarter), F#2 (quarter), E2 (quarter), D2 (quarter), C2 (quarter), B1 (quarter), A1 (quarter), G1 (quarter), F#1 (quarter), E1 (quarter), D1 (quarter), C1 (quarter). Chords above are C, Dsus, D, C, G. The lyrics are: 'Re - jice and be glad! Bless - ed are you; ho - ly are you! Re - jice and be glad! Yours is the king - dom of God!'.

## 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.*

## Live in Charity

*Live in charity and steadfast love, live in charity; God will dwell with you.*

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

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 7:31-37

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

**\*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**

*Every Time I Feel the Spirit*

Chancel Choir

*Arr. by Greg Gilpin*

**\*OFFERTORY**

*Let Us Bring Every Gift*



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



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



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

## \*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Giving God, we give our gifts in love and thanksgiving for all that we have been given. Help us give with hearts and minds open to the possibilities of what we can do to heal the brokenness of our world. Let our love travel where we do not, making pathways of peace where there are none, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Sending

## \*HYMN

*Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*

Blue #496

## \*BLESSING

## POSTLUDE

Reprinted music used by permission under the following licenses:  
OneLicense.net A-703731; CCLI License 2892021

### SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers  
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers  
Cantor: David Reilly  
Liturgist: Alan Tuchtenhagen  
Deacons: Karen Lloyd, Loral Keil,  
Brian Miller, Cindy Gandrud,  
Laura Anderson  
Organist: Marsha Pearson  
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman  
Trustee: Tim Bylander  
Coffee  
Fellowship: Fuller Family  
Counters: Diane Welsh, Mark Anderson  
*Altar table flowers are given in celebration of  
Farnum and Kahla Fuller's 10<sup>th</sup> wedding  
anniversary.*

### 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>Sept 1, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,689	\$ 361,035
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 366,205

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:**

Sue Taylor, Melissa Oscanyan (friend of Ann Nelson), Linda (daughter of Chuck White), Jeff (brother-in-law of Janice Healy), Doris (sister-in-law of Bonnie Jones Witthuhn), Kate Kirkwood (friend of Traci Hagberg), Rev. Kurt Katzmar, Larry Bauer, Barbara de Souza, Michael

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

- For those who will be teaching Sunday School this year, we are thankful for you
- For those joining our Committees and Teams as they meet for the first time on Tuesday, September 17th, may you bring your God given gifts to help our church community grow in faith, love and service
- For those who served at the Funeral Luncheon on Saturday, you are angels to the Wells family, thank you
- For those who participated in the Youth Musical, it was awesome!
- For those who unloaded, sold and bought our peaches for our youth fundraiser, enjoy!

**Prayers for our World:**

- For the FMSC mobile packing event coming to River Falls on September 11-12, that our community may be bound together and demonstrate the love of Jesus in word and action, and those receiving food may be strengthened
- For those involved in the latest school shooting, this time in Georgia, how long O God, how long...
- For a safe and successful school year full of learning and growth
- For civilians caught in bloody conflict in Israel and Gaza, Ukraine and Russia who are always the ones who suffer in times of war, may a new way forward be found to bring lasting peace
- For those working to care for the gift of God's good creation

**Prayers of Thanksgiving:**

- For our choir and bell groups who began practicing this past Wednesday, we missed you!
- For the 425 students served at this year's Tools For School program, may they have a great year!
- For the gift of Jackson Thomas Jensen, first grandchild of Neal and Michelle Jensen, that the parents Jonah and Mya may grow in love and faith
- For Kahla and Farnum Fuller who celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary Friday and who grace us with cake for Coffee Fellowship and flowers on the communion table this Sunday, may your love continue to grow
- For Barb and Larry Peterson who celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary on September 2nd with family and a car show in which Larry won first place, may God continue to bless you

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

- For Norma Revels as her family gathers to celebrate the life of her mother Norma Ray at Roberts UCC this Sunday, September 8 at 2pm, may they be blessed with strength and warm memories
- For the family of Richard (Zeke) Wells, may his adult daughters Sarah and Karen be comforted as they gathered here at church on Saturday for a Memorial Service

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

## Announcements

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

### Loving God

**New to Church:** Are you a first-time visitor? Please stop at the welcome table in the gathering area to receive a special welcome gift from us!

**Sunday Morning Text Study:** Please join us on Sunday mornings to discuss the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets from 9:00–9:50 Sunday mornings in the Youth Room. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

**Adult Bible Study Resumes:** Wednesday afternoon Adult Bible Study resumes **Sept 11, 1:00–2:30 pm**. The group will read and discuss *Matthew: The Gospel of Promised Blessings*, by Matthew L. Skinner. Copies of the book are available in the office for \$14.00. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

### Loving Neighbor

**College Pack Items Needed:** We will send college packs to our church kids away at college as well as local UWRF and CVTC students. Please consider bringing items for the packs. Think fun toys, useful items for college kids & food items that are light & easy to pack. We will have about 30 packages this year. Bring in items by Sept 29 please!

**River Falls Food Pantry:** The Food Pantry is in urgent need of monetary donations! Information about donations is on their website. And grocery donations can be brought to 705 St. Croix Street during their hours of operation: Mon 10am-12pm & 6-7:30pm; Wed 1-5pm; Thurs 6-7:30pm; Fri 10am-12pm. Thank you!!

**First Church Companions:** The “**Companions**” meet quarterly to support each other, help new companions, and discuss questions. If you are willing to visit with someone in our church community and connect at least once a month with a call or visit, please sign-up. If you are interested in receiving regular visits, there is also a line on the same sign-up sheet for “**Buddies.**” Contact Pastor Deb with questions.

**Among Friends** is a community-based social respite program serving adults who have memory loss who reside in Pierce & St. Croix Counties. For more information, call (715) 293-2561. Check out the website: [amongfriendsrf.com](http://amongfriendsrf.com) & Facebook page. It is held at the church **Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am to 3pm**.

**Among Friends Volunteers Needed:** The program has expanded to two days a week which means they need more volunteers. Training is provided. They are particularly in need of male volunteers but are willing to receive all. To volunteer, contact the new program coordinator Sarah Schaffner-Dow at [amongfriendsrf@gmail.com](mailto:amongfriendsrf@gmail.com) or talk to Phyllis Meyers or Marshall Skule who are both volunteers.

**Simpson Shelter Donations:** Please note that all donations to the Simpson Shelter need to be **new** items. They will not take anything that is used. Thank you.

### Loving Self

**Young Families Gathering - Sun, Sept 22, 11am-1pm:** Families and kids are invited to join us on the church lawn after service (during coffee fellowship) for a fall fair! There will be a bouncy house, face painting, & other activities for children, and time for families to connect and talk over sandwiches and snacks! Feel free to invite other families and their children to join in on the fun! Please sign up at church or online.

**Attention Parents of College Students!** We are collecting addresses of our church kids who are in college so we can send and deliver college packs. Please have them into the church by September 15 so we can get them off on time! Please email them to [office@firstchurchrf.org](mailto:office@firstchurchrf.org). Thank you!

**Wednesday Night Family Meals Resume!** Starting **Wed, Oct 2**, our Family Meals will resume in the Fellowship Hall serving from 5:15 to 6:00 pm. We begin with Taco Night! We will open the line early for those youth going with Alex to Whirlyball. Cost is \$8 per person with a family max of \$30. Sign up by 4pm the day before.

**Merry Widows:** They will meet on **Wed, September 18 at 1:00 pm at Applebees in Hudson, WI**. All widows are welcome to join us for lunch and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

**Cribbage Night:** The cribbage group meets on the second Monday at **7:00 pm**. Players are asked to donate \$2 and the group decides which charity to donate to. All players & abilities welcome. The next game is on **Sept 9**.

**Anxious Generation Learning Community on Tues, Nov 12:** It is clear families and kids are struggling today, often because of changes and challenges of technology. Pastor Chris will be presenting his insights from a wonderful book: Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness. Other presenters will include Middle School Teacher Jenny Luedtke & our Youth Minister & High School Teacher Alex Plum. If you want to read the book, please sign up for a copy by Sept 29. Copies are \$20 each and will be available from the church office.

**Men's Group:** Our church men's group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am** in the Youth Room. All men are welcome to join us for coffee, donuts and lively conversation. We gather for an hour and Pastor Chris leads us into a brief discussion. Our next gatherings are **Tues, Sept 17 and Oct 1**. Join us!

**Women's Group:** Interested in fellowship and community with other women? Pastor Deb invites you to join her at noon every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. Please bring a sack lunch. The next meetings will be **Sept 10 & 24**.

**Let's Knit Together:** Calling all who knit, crochet, or have a craft that can be brought to church. Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am in the Fellowship Hall**. We have a great time sharing our current projects and enjoying each other's company. Any questions, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or [fristroe@gmail.com](mailto:fristroe@gmail.com)

**Church Yoga:** The church yoga group meets on **Tuesdays and Thursdays** in the church Fellowship Hall from **9:00-10:00 am** and via Zoom. Please contact the church office to receive the Zoom link.

**WISE Corner:** NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group is held the **2nd & 4th Thursdays at 6:30 pm at the River Falls Public Library**. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

### ***Community Life***

**ONE More Sunday School Teacher Needed:** We still need one more teacher in order to have all the spots filled. Please volunteer. Teachers teach as part of a team and typically teach once every three Sundays. The need is urgent. To volunteer or for more information, please contact Pastor Stacy.

**Worship Bag Organizer Needed:** We have worship bags with activities for young children to use during worship. The Christian Education committee is looking for two volunteers to help replenish the bags prior to Sundays. The job will typically take 30 minutes. If you would like to be part of a team to do this task, please contact Pastor Stacy.

**Mortgage Burning:** We are burning the church bank mortgage! Join us on **Sun, Sept 15** when, after worship, we will gather out on the church lawn to creatively burn our church mortgage leaving us bank debt free!

**An Evening of Art: Sabbatical Trip Update:** You are invited to "An Evening of Art" on **Tues, Sept 24, at 6:30 pm**. Pastor Stacy will share a few stories about the Myers family's sabbatical trip and explore favorite pieces of art. Dessert will be included. Please sign up at church or online.

**Wednesday School Workers Needed:** Wednesday School begins on **October 2**. We need adult volunteers, drivers to transport children from school to church, and people to provide snacks. Please consider volunteering. Please sign up at church or online.

### ***Youth Events***

**Fall Confirmation and Church Intern Orientation: Orientation for students in Grades 6-8 is TODAY following worship. This meeting is required for confirmands and parents.** Orientation for students in Grades 9-12 will be Wed, Sept 18, 6:30-7:30 pm. This meeting is **required** for Third Year Confirmands, Church Interns, and parents. Please register all students. Registration forms are available online or in the church office.

**Wednesday School:** All children who will be in kindergarten through Grade 5 are invited to participate in Wednesday School. Elementary students in River Falls are picked up at the four elementary schools in town at the end of the school day. Wednesday School concludes at 5:15. Registration & permission forms are available at church & online. Wednesday School begins **October 2**. Please contact Pastor Stacy with questions.

**Field Trip to WHIRLYBALL – Wed, Oct 2, from 5:00-8:30 pm:** Sign up online or at church for a whirlyball field trip to Bloomington MN! **Please register each individual person wanting to attend. \$10 per student.** Friends are welcome to come! Wednesday meal will be served early for children leaving on the trip (if you register for the meal) so you can eat before we leave. Schedule will be: 5pm - Depart church in church van; 6pm - Arrive at Whirlyball, Whirlyball reservation 1 hour; 7pm - 30min-1 hour of game laser tag; 7:30-8pm - Depart WhirlyBall; 8:30-9pm - Return to church.

**SCRIPTURE LESSON: Matthew 22:34-40**

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

**GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 7:31-37**

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’, that is, ‘Be opened.’ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’

---

