

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

December 8, 2024



SECOND SUNDAY
OF
Advent

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

December 8, 2024

Second Sunday of Advent

10:00 am

Gathering

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
- Francis of Assisi

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.

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

- Please stop at the welcome station for a gift.
- Please note our worship service is livestreamed.

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Today is the second Sunday of Advent. The second candle is the candle of PEACE. Peace is a gift from God, the assurance that we are right with the God who created us.

P: **It was of peace the angels sang as their great light filled the heavens and the shepherds learned of the Christmas gift of God in Jesus Christ.**

(Light the second Advent candle)

L: Jesus told us that the peace he gives us is a peace which can be found in no other place. It is wholeness, health, life itself.

P: **Jesus Christ is our Peace: May God make us a peaceful people.**

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

***HYMN**

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

Blue #160

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of the Prophets, **into the wilderness you sent your messenger to prepare for the coming of your Son. In every age, your Word has called your people from death to life, and from darkness into light. In our own day, you have raised up voices who call us to turn and mend our ways. Open our hearts to your good news, help us to repent and make us ready to welcome Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

L: John the Baptist came to prepare people for the coming of Jesus.

P: **We too need to be prepared.**

L: John called people to be ready to greet the Christ child.

P: **We too need to be called.**

L: John reminded people of the important things in life.

P: **We too need to be reminded.**

All: **Jesus is coming to set us free. Let us watch and listen, wait and watch for signs of God's Messiah here and now.**

L: 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**

*He came down that we may have hope; He came down that we may have hope;
He came down that we may have hope; hallelujah forever more.*

*He came down that we may have peace; He came down that we may have peace;
He came down that we may have peace; hallelujah forever more.*

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Philippians 1:3-11

PSALM 130 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R



Wait-ing, wait - ing, wait-ing for the Lord;

Wait-ing, wait - ing, wait-ing for the Lord.

L: Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

P: **If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.**

L: I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

P: **O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is God who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. R**

Celebrating the Meal

All Christians are welcome at the Lord's table. The bread is gluten-free. The cup is alcohol-free. Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.

The Invitation to the Meal

L: Brothers and sisters in Christ, as we wait and watch during this Advent season, we pray...

P: **Come, O Prince of Peace, and teach us your ways.**

L: As we look for signs of Emmanuel, God with all of us, we pray...

P: **Come, O Prince of Peace, and teach us your ways.**

L: As we wait and watch, prepare and get ready for the arrival of the Messiah yet again, we pray...

P: **Come, O Prince of Peace, and teach us your ways.**

All: **Come let us gather together at the table of our Lord.**

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:

The King of Glory Comes

Blue #159

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain (Unison)

The King of glo - ry comes, the na - tion re - joic - es.

O - pen the gates be - fore him, lift up your voic - es. voic - es.

Blest Are They

Blue #666

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain

The musical score consists of three staves of music in the key of D major (one sharp). The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The melody is written in a simple, hymn-like style. The lyrics are: "Re - jice and be glad! Bless - ed are you;". Above the first staff are guitar chords: All, C, D7, G, D, Em, G, C, G. The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: "ho - ly are you! Re - jice and be glad!". Above the second staff are guitar chords: Am, A, D, C, D7, Em, Em7. The third staff concludes the refrain with lyrics: "Yours is the king - dom of God!". Above the third staff are guitar chords: C, Dsus, D, C, G.

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!

Come to the Table of Grace

The musical score is in 3/4 time and the key of D minor (two flats). The melody is written in a simple, hymn-like style. The lyrics are: "1 Come to the ta - ble of grace. Come to the ta - ble of grace. This is God's ta - ble; it's not yours or mine. Come to the ta - ble of grace." The score consists of three staves of music.

1 Come to the ta - ble of grace. Come to the ta - ble of
grace. This is God's ta - ble; it's not yours or
mine. Come to the ta - ble of grace.

ADDITIONAL VERSES: 2. PEACE, 3. LOVE, 4. JOY, 5. HOPE

Wait For The Lord

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Wait For The Lord'. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: 'Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.' The second system has the same key signature and time signature. The melody continues with the lyrics: 'Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!'. The score includes various musical notations such as chords (Em, C, Am6, B, D, G, Am, B, Em), dynamics (p, mf), and articulation marks.

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.)

*Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (stomp, stomp).
You do not know the hour when the Lord is coming.
Stay awake (clap, clap). Be ready (stomp, stomp).
The Lord is coming soon.*

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 3:1-6

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

*HYMN

Prepare the Royal Highway

1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.

Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.

Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

Refrain

Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

*STATEMENT OF FAITH for Advent

L: In quietness and darkness, in peace and confusion, Jesus Christ wants to make his home and meet his friends. He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope for the world.**

L: In him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant;

P: **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world.**

L: In him there is neither black nor white, neither north nor south;

P: **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world.**

L: In him there is neither male nor female, neither master nor servant;

P: **All are one in Jesus Christ.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world.**

L: He is the light of life:

P: **He is the hope of the world. 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

Huron Carol

Chancel Choir

Arr. by Susan LaBarr

*OFFERTORY

Prepare the Way of the Lord

(Sung three times in a round)

Pre - pare the way of the Lord. Pre - pare the way of the Lord,

and all peo-ple will see the sal - va - tion of our God. Pre -

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

We are waiting, Lord. We have been waiting for a long, long time. Waiting for love that breaks down hostile walls, and light that brightens darkened minds; waiting for peace that always seems at hand, yet never quite arrives; waiting for abstract truth and justice to become concrete. Lord, thank you for our Advent work of looking out for the lost and lonely. Use these gifts to further your work in our world. Amen.

Sending

*HYMN

People, Look East

Blue #161

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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

SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Bonnie Jones Witthuhn
Deacons: Brian Miller, Ann Nelson,
Loral Keil, Kathy Rausch,
Laura Anderson
Organist: Terry Mithun
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Matt Bastien
Coffee
Fellowship: Merry Widows – St. B's Donuts
Counters: Dennis Linder, Jane Truesdill

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Christopher Myers
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers
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>Dec 1, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 10,884	\$ 509,328
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 502,224

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, Jeff (brother-in-law of Janice Healy), Barbara de Souza, Mike (friend of Mark Hudnall), Larry Bauer, Kevin (friend of Tanya Larsen), Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For those gearing up for the Advent Workshop for families this Sunday, may it be a time of crafty connections
- For those who will receive gifts from the Giving Tree, may they be tangible signs of God's presence
- For those receiving amaryllis plants, may they kindle joy in all who receive them
- For those who will receive food as part of the Reverse Advent Calendar, may it bless givers and receivers
- For our Discipleship Team as they work to secure pledges to fully fund our church ministry for 2025 as we dedicated our financial pledges on Sunday, November 17th, may we be blessed with generous hearts
- For our Sunday School kids working on their Christmas program on Sunday, December 22, may it kindle faith in them and us

Prayers for our World:

- For lasting peace in the Middle East that brings justice and security to all people and for those working for a lasting peace in the Middle East, may God's Spirit be present
- For all of us as we work to better care for the gift of God's good creation and reduce the effects of climate change

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For Joyce Kampstra who celebrated her 90th birthday on November 30th, congratulations on making this milestone!
- For Sonny and Mary Miner who celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary on December 1, may God continue to work in and through you both!
- For Loral Keil and Brian Miller who celebrated their 43rd wedding anniversary on November 28, may you continue to grow in love
- For our own Matt Cernohous who was recently appointed acting Fire Chief for the River Falls Fire Department, God bless you in your service to our community

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For Tanya Larsen as she mourns her mother Gloria who died last Sunday, may her family mourn in hope
- For the Paulson family as they mourn Richard, and the Hector family as they mourn Jean, may their families be strengthened at this difficult time

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

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Philippians 1:3-11

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled,

and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,

and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"