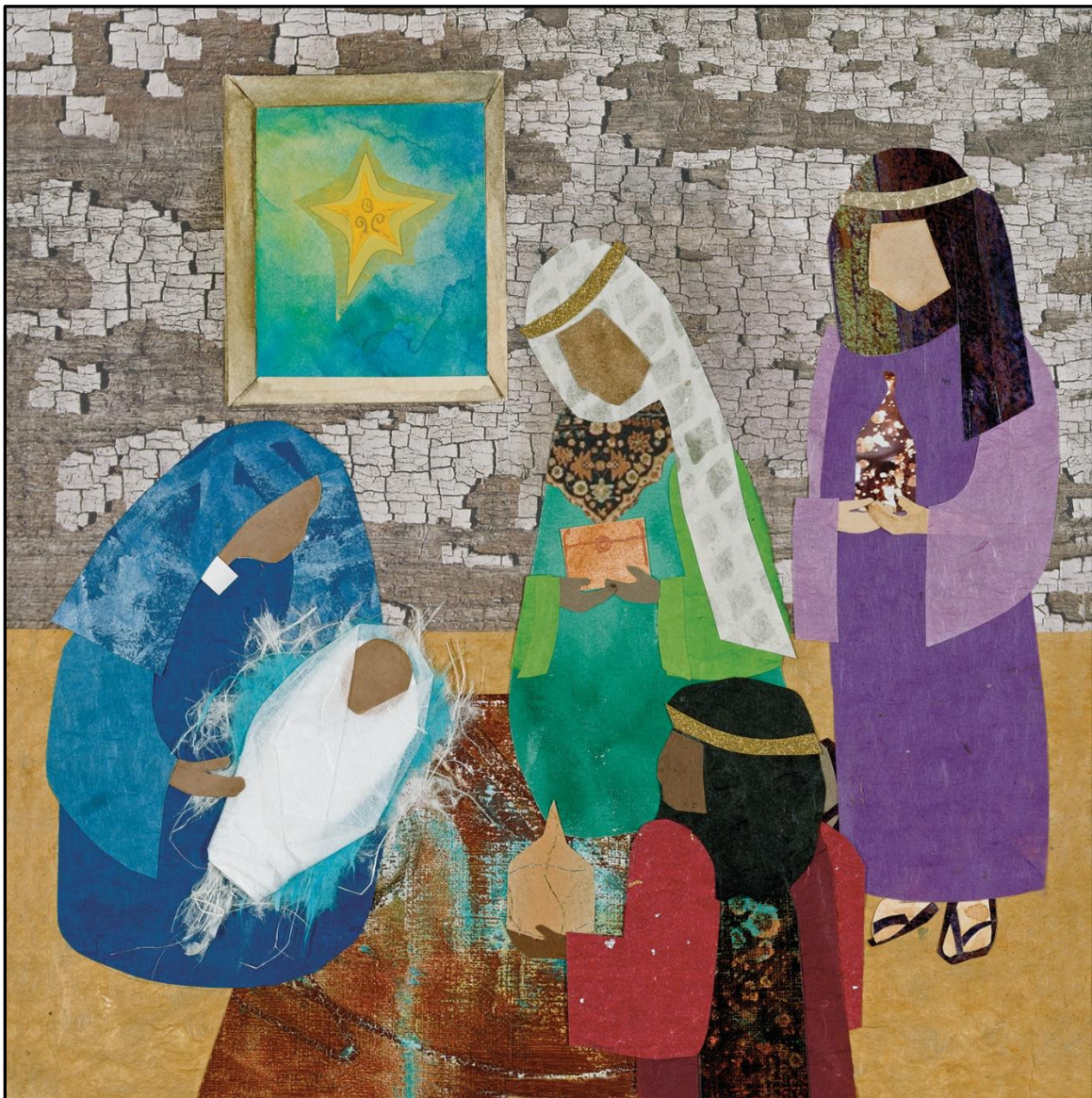


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

January 5, 2025



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

January 5, 2025

Epiphany Sunday

10:00 am

Gathering

“God is not my personal valet. God does not build a protective fence around my life, keep me from trouble, fulfill my personal desires, or guarantee my success. However, through prayer God offers me comfort, reassurance, satisfaction, courage, hope, and peace.”

- Jimmy Carter, Faith: A Journey for All

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: Arise, shine, for your light has come.

P: Stand up, a new day is dawning,

L: A new year is born,

P: Fresh and clean.

L: Arise, shine, for your light has come.

P: Emmanuel, God is with us,

L: On every path we take,

P: No matter where we go.

L: Arise, shine, for your light has come,

P: And the stars still shine,

L: Where Christ is present,

P: And voices sing in praise!

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

*HYMN

I Am the Light of the World

Black #584

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Searcher of Hearts, you know us from the beginning. You see in us more good and beauty than we have dared to believe. You beckon us to do more than we have dared to try. Forever you call our names. But we have filled our ears with the sounds of the world. We have timidly spoken of your great love. We have doubted the gifts hidden within each of us. Forgive us, O God, and set us back on your path of light we pray. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Searcher of hearts, shine your forgiving light into our hesitancy.

P: **Embolden us to live with such joy and fire that all the world may know of your love.**

L: In the name of Jesus Christ, let us live as God's reconciled people and be at peace. 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.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Ephesians 3:1-12

PSALM 72:1-7 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R

In his days jus - tice will flou - rish;
in his days full - ness of peace for - ev - er - more.

L: Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

P: **May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.**

- L: May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.
- P: May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.**
- L: May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.
- P: In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more. 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: With joy let us come before our Lord and Savior.
- P: Let the Light of Jesus Christ shine on us and on all people.**
- L: Christ comes to gladden our hearts, restore our souls.
- P: Christ comes to give hope to the despairing, joy to the joyless.**
- L: In him we see God and God's hope for the whole wide world.
- P: In him we see ourselves as we can be.**

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

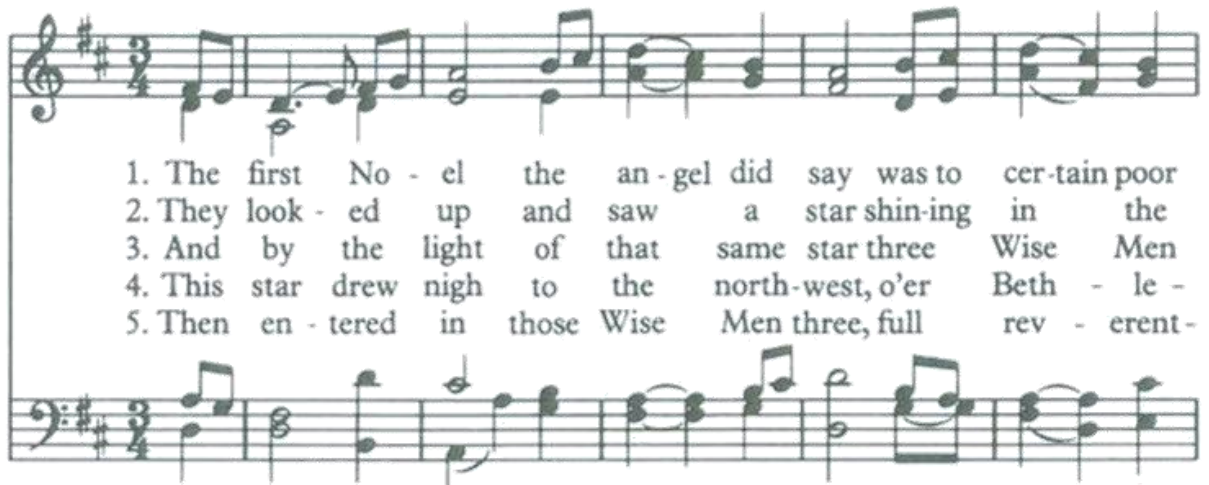
- L: We praise your name as we remember the mystery of faith...
- All: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Prayer of Consecration

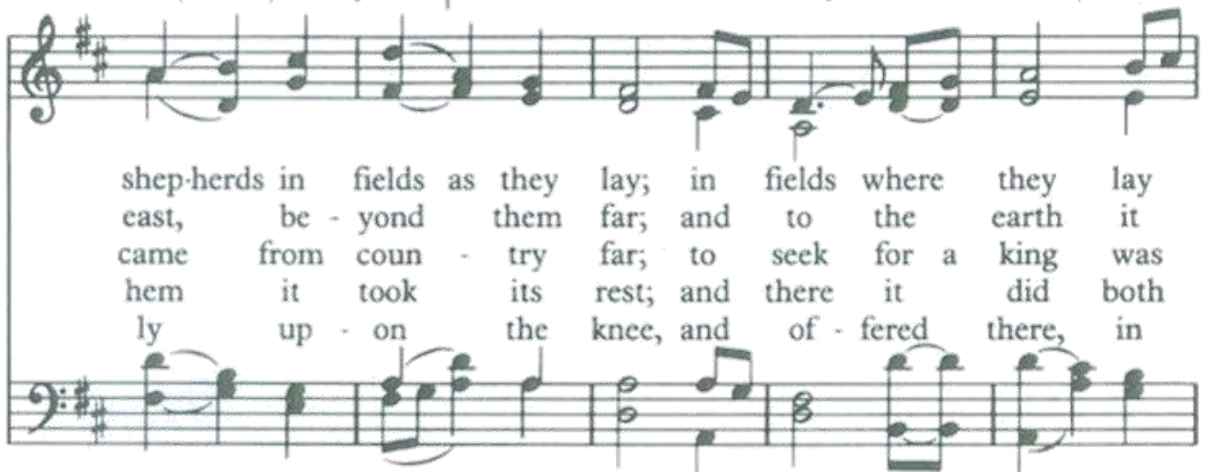
Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

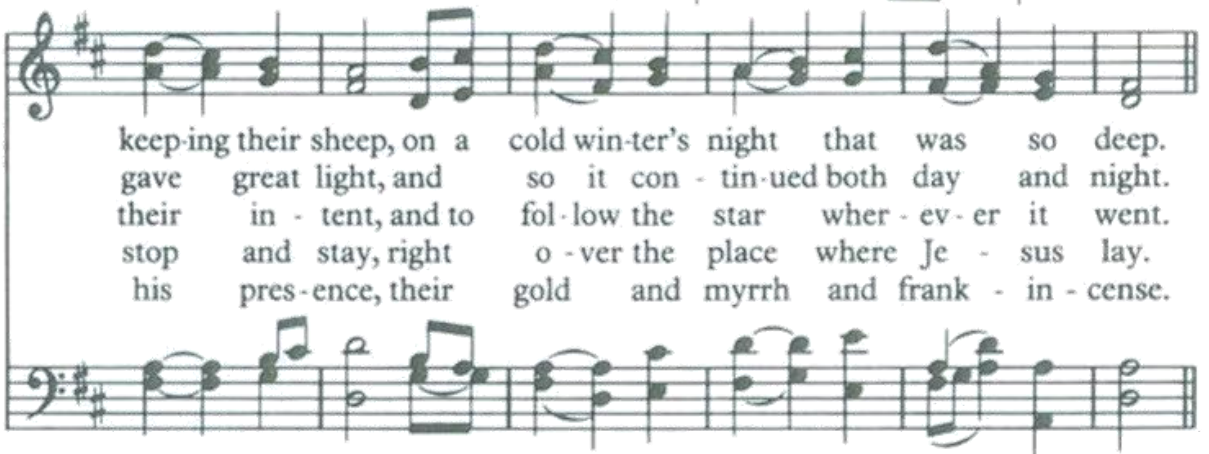
The First Noel



1. The first No - el the an - gel did say was to cer - tain poor
2. They look - ed up and saw a star shin - ing in the
3. And by the light of that same star three Wise Men
4. This star drew nigh to the north - west, o'er Beth - le -
5. Then en - tered in those Wise Men three, full rev - erent -

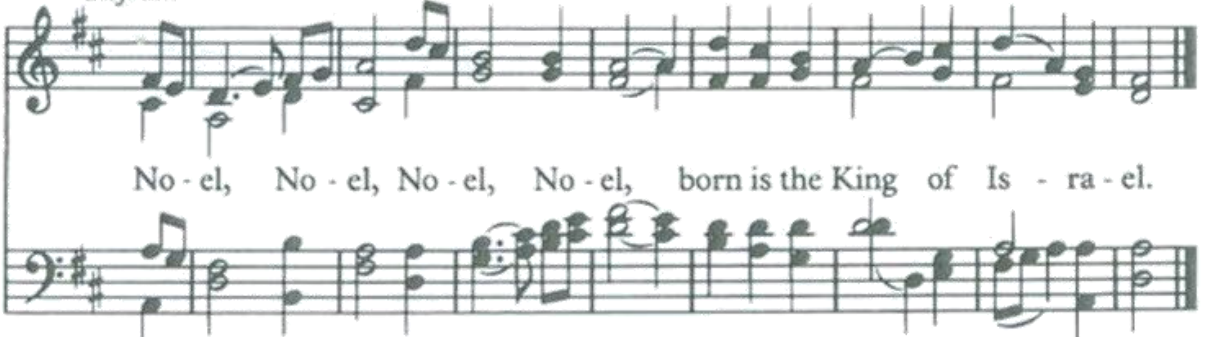


shep - herds in fields as they lay; in fields where they lay
east, be - yond them far; and to the earth it
came from coun - try far; to seek for a king was
hem it took its rest; and there it did both
ly up - on the knee, and of - fered there, in



keep - ing their sheep, on a cold win - ter's night that was so deep.
gave great light, and so it con - tin - ued both day and night.
their in - tent, and to fol - low the star wher - ev - er it went.
stop and stay, right o - ver the place where Je - sus lay.
his pres - ence, their gold and myrrh and frank - in - cense.

Refrain



No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el, born is the King of Is - ra - el.

What Child Is This?

What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping? Refrain

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?

Good Christians, fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. Refrain

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king, to own him; the King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him. Refrain

Refrain: This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary.

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light



1 I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to fol - low Je - sus.
2 I want to see the brightness of God. I want to look at Je - sus.
3 I'm look-ing for the com-ing of Christ. I want to be with Je - sus.



9
God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is
Clear Sun of Righ-teous-ness, shine on my path, and show me the way to the
When we have run with pa-tience the race, we shall know the joy of



15
Je - sus. In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both a
Fa - ther.
Je - sus.



24
like. The Lamb is the light of the ci ty of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Je - sus

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.)

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 2:1-12

SERMON

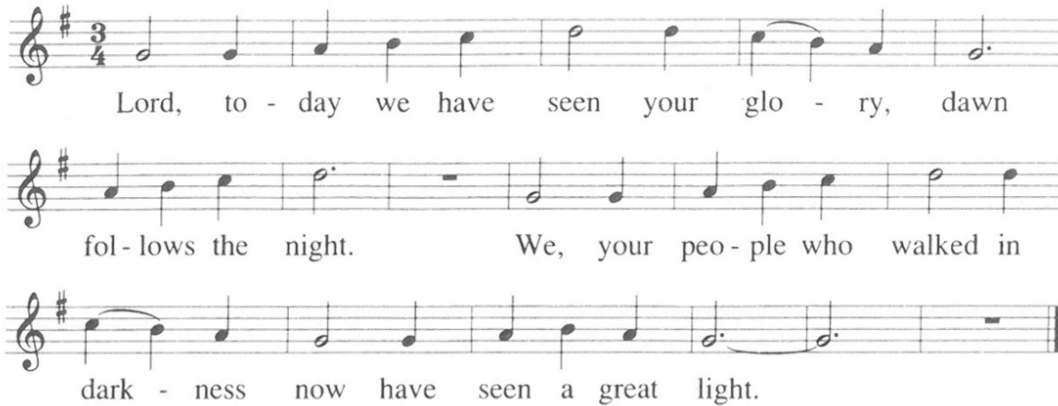
Rev. Chris Myers

*HYMN

Lord, Today

Verse 1 – Cantor; Verses 2-5 – All

Refrain



Lord, to - day we have seen your glo - ry, dawn
fol - lows the night. We, your peo - ple who walked in
dark - ness now have seen a great light.

Verses



1. A child is born, a Son giv - en
2. The Lord is king, the na - tions re -
3. O Beth - le - hem, you are from of
4. The days will come, the Lord prom - ised
5. New light has dawned up - on all the
us, on him do - min - ion shall rest.
joyce, let all God's peo - ple be glad. The
old, too small a - mong Ju - dah's clans.
us, when God would raise up a shoot Re -
just, glad - ness for up - right of heart.
His name shall be Won - der - ful God,
heav - ens pro - claim jus - tice for all.
From you shall come a rul - er this day,
to rule the land, reign as a king,
joyce in the Lord, you faith - ful ones. D.C.
Coun - sel - or, Prince of Peace.
Glo - ry has filled the land.
shep - herd to guide the land.
whose name is Lord the Just.
Give thanks to God's great name.

*STATEMENT OF FAITH for Epiphany (from UMC)

We believe in God, the creator of all things, the giver of life and breath.

We believe in Jesus Christ, born Emmanuel, God with us, baptized and revealed the most beloved Son of God; he sought to heal humanity by taking our brokenness upon himself, suffering for us, dying for us and being raised from the dead for our sake and for the sake of all the world. We believe that he will come again.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, continually poured out refreshing our lives, leading us into a new day, ever-birthing the church, the body of Christ in the world. This Spirit is our soul companion and counselor of truth reminding us of the gift of faith, the ever presence of God and the promise of eternal life. Thanks be to God! 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

Mary Did You Know

Missy Linaberry
Deb Hoffman

*OFFERTORY

Let Us Bring Every Gift



*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

God of Light and Hope, **we bring our gifts to further your work and ministry of love in all the world. May our gifts bring light and new opportunities to all. May our gifts and our lives bring great light into the pains and sorrows of the world. In the name of Jesus. Amen.**

Sending

*HYMN

We Three Kings of Orient Are

#233

*BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Ginny Larson
Deacons: Loral Keil, Brian Miller,
Karen Lloyd, Tanya Larsen,
Becky Pajac
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Steve Koecher
Welcomers: Susan Walden
Counters: Jean Smith, Vicki Sippel
Altar table flowers are in celebration of Chris and Stacy Myers' 30th wedding anniversary.

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 29, 2024</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,450	\$ 555,505
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,463	\$ 544,076

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

*Final 2024 budget numbers will be available next week.



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), Tara (friend of Dave Reilly)

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For all who made our Christmas Eve worship services so special (and full!) this year!
- For our Sunday School kids who presented their Christmas program on Sunday, December 22, it brought the joy of Christ to us
- For those who received gifts from the Giving Tree, may they be tangible signs of God's presence
- For those who received amaryllis plants, may they kindle joy in all who receive them
- For those receiving food as part of the Reverse Advent Calendar, blessing our community with nearly 1500 pounds of food and \$710 for the Food Pantry, may it bless givers and receivers
- For our Discipleship Team as they work to secure pledges to fully fund our church ministry for 2025, may we be blessed with generous hearts

Prayers for our World:

- For all of us as we return to normal mode after our Christmas and New Year's break, may we enjoy the return of the sun!
- 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 Ruth Anne and Chuck White who celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary on December 26, may this second chance you have received at love continue to grow and bear good fruit
- For Salem Elaine who arrived on December 19th to Marlee and Joe Querna and grandparents Wendy and John Querna, may she be welcomed in love and grace
- For Maverick Martin Bos born on December 18th to Alison and Tony Bos and grandparents Dean and Sue Grisar and proud uncle Dennis, who arrived at 7 pounds 9 ounces and 20 inches, may he grow in grace and love
- For all who helped cook, serve and clean up after our Wednesday Night meals these past 3 months, you are angels!
- For the \$1198.23 that was donated to the River Falls Food Pantry as the proceeds from our annual Giving Thanks meal in November, that you for your generosity!

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Jimmy Carter as they mourn his death, and we remember his accomplishments
- For Tanya Larsen as she mourns her mother Gloria who died recently, 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.



Adoration of the Magi by Leonardo Da Vinci



Adoration of the Magi by Filippino Lippi

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Ephesians 3:1-12

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— for surely you have already heard of the commission of God’s grace that was given to me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s grace that was given to me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.’ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.