

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

April 20, 2025



Easter Sunday

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

April 20, 2025

Easter Sunday

9:00 & 10:30 am

Gathering

*I believe in Christianity, as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it,
but because by it I see everything else. - C.S. Lewis*

*The very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most
you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance, but live right in it,
under its roof. - Barbara Kingsolver*

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.

PRELUDE

I Know My Redeemer Lives

Brass Group

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: This is the good news: the grave is empty, Christ is risen!

P: **Alleluia! Christ the Lord is risen indeed!**

L: This is the good news: the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can
never put it out!

P: **Alleluia! Christ the Lord is risen indeed!**

L: This is the good news: once we were no people, now we are God's people!

P: **Alleluia! Christ the Lord is risen indeed!**

All: **Come let us worship the God of resurrection!**

***HYMN**

Christ the Lord is Risen Today

Blue #288

(verses 1 and 2 – all, verse 3 – choir, verse 4 – all)

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Holy and Life Giving God, **we confess that too often we have not been faithful
witnesses. Jesus stands among us, yet we fail to recognize him. Jesus reigns as Lord,
but we fail to honor him. Jesus moves among us through the work of your Holy
Spirit, but we fail to respond. Forgive us, God of Grace. Guide us by your Word, fill
us with your Spirit and free us by the power of our Risen Lord. Amen.**

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

L: Jesus lives again and comes among us breathing grace, reconciliation and peace.

P: **Let us embrace his forgiveness, be reconciled with our neighbors and be at peace.**

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)

Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah

Halle, Halle, Halle – lu – jah, Hallelujah, Hal-le-lu-jah

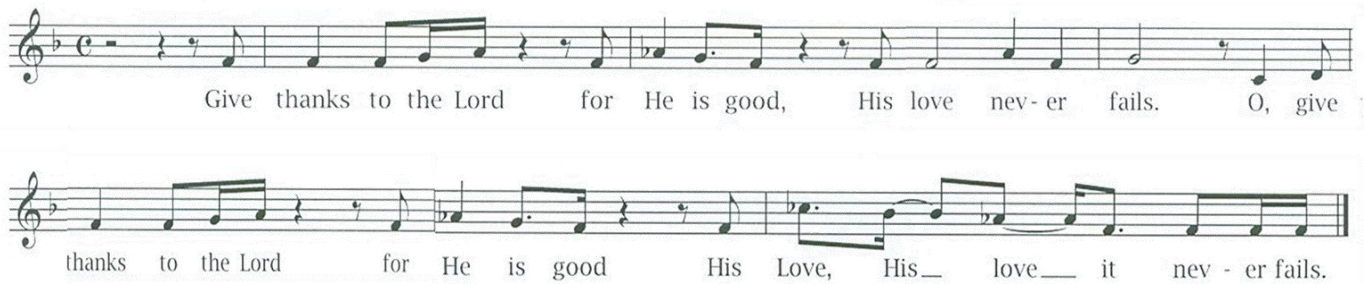
Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 65:17-25

PSALM 118:1-2, 15-24

R



L: O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good; God's steadfast love endures forever!

P: **Let Israel say, "God's steadfast love endures forever."**

L: There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;

P: **The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hands of the Lord does valiantly."**

L: I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.

P: **The Lord has punished me severely, but God did not give me over to death. R**

L: Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

P: **This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.**

L: I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

P: **The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.**

L: This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

P: **This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. R**

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Chris Myers

SONG OF BLESSING (Children may return to their families or young children can go to the nursery. Sunday School resumes next week.)

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.

Proclaiming the Word

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 24:1-12

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Crown Him with Many Crowns

Blue #317

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH FOR EASTER**

We believe in the God of Resurrection,
Who lights the dawn to chase away the darkness;
Who rolls away each stone of doubt;
Who surprises us with incredible gifts of family and friends, silence and laughter;
Who raises us from sadness and despair to the possibilities of blessing and joy.

We believe in Jesus the Christ,
Friend of the poor and searcher for the lost,
Who comes to us in our grief and longing, calls us by name and sends us on the
paths of peace to speak of an awesome love that is not overcome by death.

We believe in the Holy Spirit our Guide,
The hidden partner, the gentle messenger of God,
Who fills our every breath with blessing;
Who guides us in the dark, beckons us to do good, speaks to us in dream and image,
and watches over us with tender compassion.

We believe in the church,
An instrument of God in this present moment, striving for justice, celebrating in joy,
clawing at despair, living in hope, praying for healing and forever proclaiming the
Good News of God's persistent and redeeming love. Amen.

THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors)

Lord in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

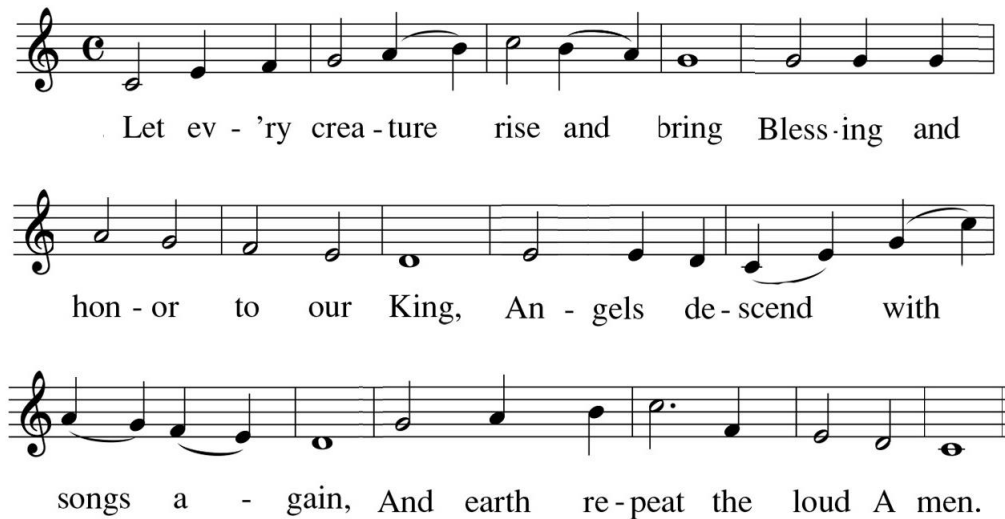
...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Chancel Choir & Brass Group

*OFFERTORY

Jesus Shall Reign



*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Holy God, in joy we meet you here. We are thankful you have blessed us with these gifts of bread and wine so we might be encouraged and strengthened for our journey as your followers. When we feel overburdened or afraid, bring forward the memory of this joyous feast — a sign of your steadfast love for all people. Amen.

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, the Gospel tells us that on the first day of the week, Jesus Christ was raised from death and appeared to Mary Magdalene. In the evening on the same day, he walked and talked with two disciples and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.
- P:** **This is the joyful feast of the people of God. Men and women, young and old, come from the east and the west, the north and the south, and gather about Christ's table.**
- L:** This table is for all people who desire to know the power and presence of Jesus Christ and to share in the community of God's people.

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.**

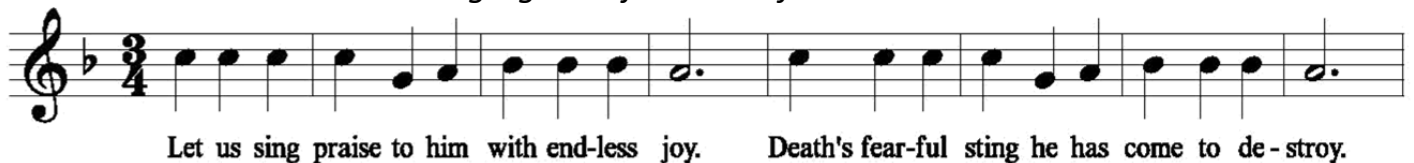
Prayer of Consecration

Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

Christ Has Arisen

Congregation joins on refrain:



Alleluia No. 1

Blue #291

Hymn of Promise

Blue #515

Goodness Is Stronger than Evil

Blue #296

Bless the Lord

Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless God's holy name.

Bless the Lord, my soul, who leads me into life.

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.

Sending

***HYMN**

Thine is the Glory

Blue #310

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

Rejoice, the Lord Is King

Brass Group

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Stacy Johnson Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: 9:00: Tanya Larsen
10:30: Alan Tuchtenhagen
Deacons: 9:00: Karen Lloyd, Loral Keil,
Brian Miller, Tanya Larsen,
Laura Anderson
10:30: Marshall Skule,
Jena Most, Paul Shepherd,
Becky Pajac, Lance Lueck
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Trustee: Vicki Sippel
Coffee
Fellowship: Easter Breakfast
Counters: Trish Graves, Allen Barnes
Brass Group: Adria Kissinger, Tim Mills,
Logan Morrisson, Holt Walker

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: Marie Roe
Office Administrator: Missy Luedtke
Nursery Attendant: Kahla Fuller
Custodian: Farnum Fuller

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Apr 13, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,705	\$ 184,938
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 159,345

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 note the church office will be closed on Easter Monday.

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Barbara de Souza, Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams), Jim French (father of Missy Linaberry), Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Peg Steinmetz, Janice Anderson (grandmother of Sarah Plum), Marc Otto, Margaret (wife of Don Baumann), Judy Schierts (sister of JoAnn Lentz), Marge Filkins

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our choir, musicians, deacons and pastors, all of whom made for a wonderful Holy Week
- For the return of Earth Fest on Saturday, April 26 UWRF, may it kindle in each of us a deeper commitment to care for God's good creation
- For the Bonhoeffer Learning Community on Tuesday, April 29, may his faith and courage inspire us today
- For those participating in the new Evening Men's Group whose final session will be Thursday April 24 at The Garage Bikes and Brews, may we better connect and support one another on our Christian journey
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she awaits a B+ kidney donor
- For those to be confirmed on Sunday, May 4, may they grow in faith and love

Prayers for our World:

- For Christians around the world celebrating Easter under the threat of war in Gaza, Ukraine, Syria
- For those facing floods in the Midwest and South, may you be given strength and help from neighbors
- For all those whose small daily acts of compassion and grace slowly help change the world (and themselves)
- For those struggling to find and afford housing, may we work toward helping them, and may God's Spirit be present in those working to support them through efforts like the Simpson Shelter, Our Neighbors' Place and Habitat for Humanity
- For our nation as economic and social uncertainty takes its toll, may we do better
- For the hope of peace in Gaza, Palestine, Israel, Sudan and Ukraine, 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 our choir, deacons, welcomers, musicians and pastors who helped us to joyfully celebrate Easter this year
- For our church families who donated home grown eggs for the Easter Breakfast, wow does it make a difference!
- For all those who will cook, serve and clean up after the Easter Breakfast
- For the return of the sun and warmer weather
- For the return of the Bouncy House on Palm Sunday, it was a blast!
- For those who led and participated in the Prayer Around The Cross Worship services in the Fellowship Hall during the Wednesdays in Lent
- For those going to River Falls High School Prom on Saturday, April 26, may you have a ton of fun

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Janice and Jerry Healy as they mourn the sudden death of their son Brian whose Memorial Service will be here at church on Wednesday, April 23 at 5pm with visitation from 3-5pm and a reception to follow, may God strengthen you in this difficult time and surround you with the love and support of friends and family
- For the family of Eunice, sister of Barb Stephens, who died this week, may she rest in God's strong care
- For all those who mourn, especially the families of Janice Healy, Wayne Revels, Arlyn Koecher (father of Steve), Rollie Hall (husband of Joan), may they 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.

EASTER LILIES 2025

Given by:

Susan Beatty

Fred and Yvonne Benson

Rene Bylander

Dyan Carrison

Marg Downing

Bob and Rebecca Ferguson

Cindy Gandrud

Gustafson Family

Suzanne Hagen

Dave Hallstrom

Stuart Henning

Deb Hoffman

Scott and Ann Jameson

Neal and Michelle Jensen

Arlene Johnson

Skip Koosmann

Andy and Christina Krueger

Lu Lueck

Barb Mahoney

Linda Mercer

Chris and Stacy Myers

Marsha Pearson, Michael, Justine,

Liam and Evie Pearson

David Reilly

Norma Revels

Arthur Rice and Elaine Diken

Rose Rude

Jean Smith

Randy and Diane Welsh

In memory of Dan Filkins and George Beatty

In honor of Ruth Anne and Charles White

In memory of Neil and Phyllis Taylor

In honor of Matthew and Sierra Bylander

In memory of Dahn and Roseann Carrison

In honor of Jesus

In memory of our parents and Bob's brother

In memory of Elizabeth Gandrud

In memory of Lorraine Scott

In memory of our dad and grandfather, Bob Gustafson

In honor of our mother and grandmother, Ann Gustafson

In memory of our great aunts, Lucile Kitzerow & Marie Harder

In memory of Margaret and Norris Johnson

In memory of Gayle

In memory of Judie

In honor of Marilyn Hoffman and Nancy Neu

In memory of James Franz

In honor of Jean O'Connor, Lora Lee-Wiggins, Anita Miller

In memory of Ardeth Anderson

In memory of Bill Johnson (spouse)

In memory of Arnold and Delpha Burkhead (parents)

In memory of Susan Koosmann

In honor of Anna, Eva

In memory of Dr. William Krueger

*In honor of my children and grandchildren for what I put
them through recently*

In memory of Terry and Mark Mahoney

In memory of Stewart Lentz

In honor of JoAnn Lentz

In memory of our grandparents

In memory of Barbara Johnson

*The hydrangea is in memory of Marshall & Vonita Ward,
Patti Haigh, and Maynard Pearson*

In memory of Ruth Reilly, Bill Reilly

In memory of my parents, David and Donna Ray

In honor of Elaine Diken

In memory of Diana Michele Rice and Arthur Rice, Jr.

In memory of Delbert and Joyce Kliebenstein

In memory of Marlyn and Bernice Mohr and Lois Smith

In honor of their children and grandchildren

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: The next unit will be a five-week session from April 23 to May 21, and the focus will be *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Copies are available in the church office for \$14. The group meets **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30**. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

Relay for Life: A huge **Thank You** to everyone for your generous giving to Relay for Life whether it be through donations, luminary bags, soup night, or the silent auction items or the Relay. Our team reached the bronze level with donations over \$2,900. THANK YOU!! Overall the Relay for Life community fundraiser has received over \$87,000 and they are still collecting till August. The money raised at the event goes to American Cancer Society. Next year's Relay for Life event is set for Friday, April 10, 2026, at the River Falls High School.

Simpson Shelter Supply Needs: Underwear - men's & women's, women's socks, men's T-shirts - all sizes, men's ankle socks, men's boxer shorts - sizes M, L, personal size body wash, personal size baby oil, lip balm, women's bras. All items MUST BE NEW. There is a bin for donations.

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 & Facebook. It is held at church **Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am to 3pm**.

Loving Self

Evening Men's Group: We have begun a three-session gathering of our church guys. During these gatherings, we will be looking at three parts of our Christian faith—grace, vocation and prayer. Please see Pastor Chris for details. Last date is **Thursday, April 24** starting at 6:30 pm at The Garage Bikes and Brews.

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 & lively conversation. Our next gatherings are **April 22 & May 6 & 20**.

Women's Group: Interested in fellowship & community with other women? You are invited to join the group at noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday. Please bring a lunch. The next meetings will be **April 22 & May 13 & 27**.

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.

Let's Knit/Craft Together: Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am. We meet at Sycamore on the first Thursday of each month & the Fellowship Hall the other Thursdays**. We have a great time sharing our projects & enjoying each other's company. For more info, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or firstroe@gmail.com

Cribbage Night: The group meets the second Monday. Players are asked to donate \$2 & the group decides which charity. Playing time is **7:00 pm**. All abilities welcome. The next game is **May 12**.

WISE Team: NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group meets the 2nd & 4th Thursdays 6:30pm at the River Falls Public Library & Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at Luther Memorial Church at 6:30pm. The WISE Team meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Join us for Easter Breakfast Today: Easter Breakfast will be served from **8:00 am to 10:15 am**. Cost is \$10 per person with a family max of \$40, all of which goes to our Youth Fund for mission trips and opportunities.

Earth Fest is a **free** community celebration that includes live music, fun family activities, food sampling, a sustainability and wellness fair, free giveaways, and more. Earth Fest will be held on **Saturday, April 26, from 12:00-4:00 pm at UW-River Falls University Center**. Please see the flyer for more information.

Special Worship Guests Fendrick & Peck - Sunday, April 27th: Madeline & Brian are a Minnesota based acoustic duo. Their exquisitely crafted music is new folk...rich in its love and connection, tender in its grief, and solid in its originality. Along with the music come two quirky and charming individuals...a loving couple, tired parents, and growing people. Come and experience the variety of offerings. Music, treats and fellowship to follow worship.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer Conversation: April 29, 6:30 pm: Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor & theologian in Germany during World War II. He was also an anti-Nazi dissident who was a founding member of the Confessing Church movement, a group that resisted efforts by the government to use churches as a pro-Nazi force to gain support and legitimacy for its goals. Eighty years after his death, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's wisdom and witness continue to inspire Christians (and non-Christians) around the world, especially in times of political upheaval. Join Dr. Lori Brandt Hale to discuss the lessons from Bonhoeffer that offer guidance and hope, and challenge us to take responsibility for the coming generation. And, if you are wondering if this is a Bonhoeffer moment, Dr. Brandt Hale will explain why "is this a Bonhoeffer moment?" is the wrong question. Dessert is included. Please sign up.

Softball News: Once again our church will sponsor a softball team in the River Falls Church Family League. The family league is a co-ed division that allows players to play at the age of 14. The co-ed description requires teams to have three women on the field at all times, so ladies please don't be afraid to sign up and play. The games are played on Monday nights at Hoffman Park. Games will begin the first Monday of June and continue until the middle of August. Practices will begin the first of May. Come join in the fun and laughs. If you are interested in playing on our team, please sign up on the sheet in the gathering area or online. If you have questions, contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman2234b@gmail.com

Holding on to Hope – Thurs, May 15, 6:30-8:00 pm: Presented by NAMI St. Croix Family Support Team in the Fellowship Hall. Join the group of family members who will share what family support can be as they discuss dealing with trauma, coping strategies, empathy and hope. Any questions, contact Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Communion Bread Volunteer Needed: The Deacon team is looking for a volunteer to help prepare our weekly communion bread. The bread is gluten-free, nut-free, and made in the comfort of your home. We'll provide the recipe, instructions, supplies, and any guidance you may need. The time commitment is approximately 3 hours every 2-3 months – perfect for someone who enjoys baking and wants to support our worship services in a special way. If you're interested or would like to learn more, please contact Karen Lloyd.

Family Resource Center Workers: The Christian Education Committee is looking for one or two more people who are willing to work with the Family Resource Center. Tasks include: managing the book collection, shelving books, arranging display books according to season, helping children and families to be connected to the Resource Center and put it to good use. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Pastor Stacy.

Youth Events

Youth Events for Wednesday, April 23:

3:45-5:15 pm Wednesday School

4:45-9:00 pm HS Whirleyball

6:30-7:30 pm MS Class

Summer Dates for Kids: Please mark your calendars. VBS-July 28-31; Children's Musical-Aug 18-21. VBS is for children age 3 to completed grade 5. The musical is for children in kindergarten through completed grade 6.

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Isaiah 65:17-25

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD—and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 24:1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.