

First Congregational United Church of Christ

*Empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the help of God,
we open our doors and hearts to all,
in service and love as modeled by Jesus Christ.*



*Fourth Sunday in Lent
Laetare
A Unity Service*

*The Lord's Day
Fourth Sunday in Lent
Laetare
A Unity Service
Nine o'clock in the Morning*

The Worship of God

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by God's holiness; the nourishment of the mind with God's truth; the purifying of the imagination by God's beauty; the opening of the heart to God's love; the surrender of the will to God's purpose—all of this gathered up in adoration.

~William Temple

The Prologue

On this day of Laetare, we celebrate a milestone in the Lenten season. We are more than halfway through this joyful discipline, note the slight sarcasm in that! Easter is now on the horizon, the glory of resurrection within sight. On this high and holy festival day, the apostle Paul evidently is in a rare celebratory mood, reminding his reader that everything old has passed away and all things have become new. It is always a beautiful metaphor no matter its manifestation! It is as if he is calling to mind his inner Isaiah! In the Witness from the Gospels in Luke today, we read that epic tale we have come to call the "Prodigal Son," knowing that none of these parabolic stories have formal titles. The Prodigal is the quintessential parable, revealing the essence of Jesus' hospitable gospel. On this day, may all things be made new for us, refreshing, renewing, restoring our spirits in every way imaginable.

Gathering Music

The Greeting

The Spirit of the still speaking God be with you.

And also with you.

The Call to Worship and Welcome

The Music for Piano

The Lighting of the Altar Candles

The Collect

Let us pray,

God of our rejoicing, we have gathered to worship the One who brings us good tidings of great joy, Laetare filling our hearts on this high and holy festival day; we give you thanks that your love for us never fails even when we wander far from home; on this day of feasting, teach us compassion for all who feel they are lost and confused; keep us from living as competitors for your favors, that we might participate joyfully in your forgiving and reconciling work, making us ambassadors for Christ, that all your children may come home to your welcoming arms; all this we pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the holy and still speaking Spirit, one God now and forever.

Amen.

*The Opening Hymn, No. 100 *When Morning Gilds the Skies* LAUDES DOMINI

*The Gathering

A new day has dawned! God's gift of presence is ours to enjoy for we are a new creation in Christ Jesus! The old is giving way to the new in these moments of worship!

Laetare is a day of forgiveness and reconciliation, a day of celebration, rejoicing in God's love for those once lost but now found, glad cries of deliverance abounding!

Beloved faith community all, shout with joy with all your hearts, faithfully offering prayers to the Holy, giving thanks to Christ in this sacred setting!

With gladness in our hearts, we join in the dance of life! With upright hearts, we gather to rejoice and sing, praising God with all our might! Laetare! Rejoice!

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view. Even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away! See, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to God's self through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to God's self, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making an appeal through us. We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Listen to what the Spirit of the still speaking God is saying!

Thanks be to God!

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So, Jesus told them this parable. "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So, he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country and he began to be in need. So, he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating. And, no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me like one of your hired hands.' So, he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—

the best one—and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it. And let us eat and celebrate! For this son of mine was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate. Now, his elder son was in the field. And when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command. Yet, you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life! He was lost and has been found!’”

Listen to what the Spirit of the still speaking God is saying!
Thanks be to God!

The Sermon *Will the Real Prodigal, Please Stand!* Timothy W. Shirley
The Music for Meditation
The Concerns of the Church
The Pastoral Prayer and Lord’s 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.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever!
Amen.**

*The Closing Hymn, No. 499 *When Love Is Found* O WALY WALY
*The Benediction

*The Fellowship Song

Let There Be Peace on Earth

WORLD PEACE

*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.
With every step I take, let this be my joyous creed.
To take each moment and
live each moment in peace, eternally!
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*

The Music for Piano

The color for the Sundays in Lent is Purple, symbolizing the penitential nature of this holy season. The color for the Fourth Sunday in Lent is Rose, symbolizing the celebratory nature of the day, and a reminder that we are more than halfway through the Lenten discipline. Reflecting a lighter mood, the liturgical name for this day is Laetare, meaning Rejoice. Called Mothering Sunday in the United Kingdom, the name Laetare is taken from the first words of the Latin Entrance Antiphon: Rejoice Jerusalem! The custom of using Rose paraments and vestments on Refreshment Sunday developed because, ironically, the color gold was used for the blessing of the golden rose by the Pope on this Sunday in recognition of outstanding service to the Church.

*You are invited to stand as you are able.

Worship Notes:

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Concerns of the Church

In accordance with CDC guidelines, wearing of masks is now optional. We will continue to sign in for worship. If we have cases of COVID within our congregation brought to our attention, we will notify everyone as soon as possible.

In case of inclement weather, if you have any question as to whether we will have Sunday services, please call the church office and you will find a message if services have been cancelled.

We need volunteers to be readers at the Maundy Thursday Tenebrae service and for the Palm/Passion liturgy on Sunday, April 10th. We would like to have as many readers as possible. First come, first serve!

Lent has arrived! Each week during Lent we will offer a soup supper beginning at Six O'clock in the Evening, followed by a brief worship service, hopefully with some discussion. Those dates are: March 30th, and April 6th. Maundy Thursday worship, April 14th, will begin at Six O'clock in Fellowship Hall with an Agape Meal, followed by Holy Communion, Footwashing, and the Service of Tenebrae in the Sanctuary. On Good Friday, April 15th, the Sanctuary will be open for meditation, prayer, and reflection from Noon until Three O'clock in the Afternoon. Finally, we will have a unity service at Nine O'clock in the Morning on Palm/Passion Sunday and Easter Day. We hope to see you there!!! Volunteers are needed. Sign-up sheets are located in the back of the Sanctuary or call Sharon Breit (715-477-2163) or Linda Sanborn (715-891-5655). Also, we invite you to please sign up for the Wednesdays you plan to attend to help us know how many people will be in attendance.

Online Giving is now available on the church website. If you have questions on how to get started with online giving feel free to reach out to Alex at alex@eagleriverucc.org or give him a call at 715-802-8501, Option 8.

As a church family, we are ready, willing, and able to share with you in your prayers of sadness and celebration. Please feel free to share your prayer with us on the church website, under the Ministries heading, or by calling the church office at 715-802-8501. To protect the privacy of all individuals please only share prayers for those, you have received direct permission to share on their behalf. We ask that any prayer requests mentioned from the pulpit have the permission of the one desiring prayer. Thank you for your understanding. Prayer Concerns: As we worship today our thoughts are with the family and friends of Nan Pophal and with our Ukrainian brothers and sisters.

Scripture readers, ushers, and camcorder operators are always needed as well as readers for the Concerns of the Church. You may sign up by visiting our website; or you may also contact Joy Turpin at: joyfaithchapinturpin@gmail.com or (715) 479-6560.

Just a friendly reminder! The last Sunday of the month is always A Unity Service, meeting at Nine o'clock in the Morning. Please put these services on your calendar. (Please take note, the Palm/Passion and Easter Day services will be unity services.)

Church Staff

Timothy W. Shirley, Pastor

Debbie Brown, Church Administrator

Jonathan Alexander (Alex) Fluegel, Information and Technology Director

Sharon Breit, Director of Christian Education

Lori Lee Hunter, Director of Music

Linda Brainard, Pianist

Norma Yaeger, Pianist

Christine Clough, Cleaning Services



First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

First Congregational United Church of Christ

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March 27, 2022

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