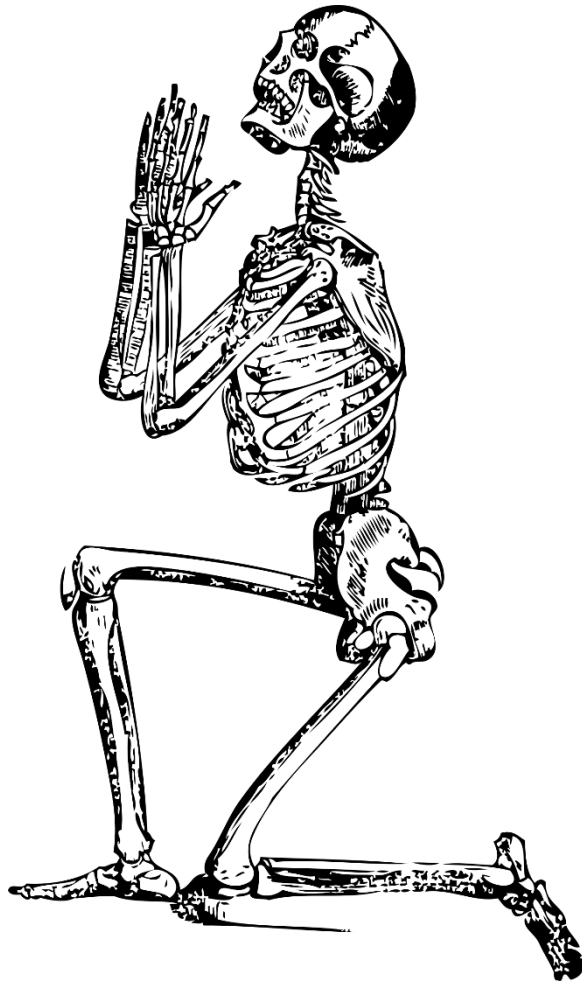


First Congregational United Church of Christ

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.



Fifth Sunday in Lent

*The Lord's Day
Fifth Sunday in Lent
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 Fifth Sunday in Lent, the day on which we make our deepest journey into darkness and despair, images of death, decay, and dying swirl all around us. In the Witness from the Gospel of John, we read the story of Lazarus' illness and demise. The deep, raw emotional capacity of Jesus comes shining through in the death of his close friend. In this rich and profound text, we read of the power of resurrection, a reminder of a brighter day coming, the day of resurrection on our liturgical radar, a day of refreshment and renewal, restoring and resurrecting all that is deceased within us, all that is dead and deadly, a depressing intoxicant always nipping at our heels, threatening to kill our spirits.

Gathering Music

The Call to Worship and Welcome

The Spirit of the still speaking God be with you.

And also with you.

The Music for Contemplation

The Lighting of the Altar Candles

The Gathering

Come out from all that binds, threatening to quench the Spirit of God within us! Give glory to the One who calls us out from our valleys of dry bones!

Out of the depths of our tombs of despair, to the core of our very being, we cry out to the God who forgives and redeems us!

In this time of worship, we long for God to hear our voice even as we wait upon the Holy, the One whose steadfast love gives us life and peace!

Breathe your breath upon us, Holy One, that we will live fully, knowing that you are God! We are listening for your voice!

Let us worship God!

The Introit (*Chalice Praise*), No. 71 *Jesus, Your Name* Morris Chapman; Claire Cloninger

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

Loving and Redeeming God, God of renewal and restoration and resurrection hope, out of the depths of our despair we cry to you this day; we have gathered to give glory to the One who calls us forth from death's dark decay, who unbinds us and sets us free that we might live life; refresh and renew us, restoring and resurrecting in us your Spirit; hear us, God of our dry bones, that we may be raised with you, setting our minds on your gift of life and peace; all this we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the holy and still speaking Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

*The Opening Hymn, No. 518 *This Is a Day of New Beginnings* BEGINNINGS

*The Litany of Praise

Out of the depths of our dry bones we cry to God, longing for the Holy One to hear our voice! We long for the presence of the Holy in our lives!

God hears us and is attentive to the supplications of our hearts!

If the Holy One should mark our iniquities, who among us could stand?

In God is the promise of forgiveness, a redemption that beckons us to awe and wonder and reverence, resurrecting us from the bonds that entomb us!

Our souls are waiting in hope for a word from God, filling us with anticipation, with far more expectation than any who watch for the morning!

It is God in whom we place our hope, the One in whose steadfast love is the greatest power of all, redeeming us from all of our iniquities! Praise the Lord!

*Glory to the Creator, and to the Christ, and to the Comforter!
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end! Amen! Amen!*

The Call to Confession¹

If it is true that God has recorded our failings, we hope it will never be published! But in truth, if the book were ever opened, every page would be blank because God forgives us of everything we have done or failed to do, sins of commission and omission! So, let us wait for God's mercy and grace as we come with our prayers of forgiveness! In the silence and stillness of these moments, let us confess before the Holy.

The Silent Confession

The Corporate Confession²

Let us pray to the Lord,

We are set free by your saving grace, generous God, yet we must confess how we are often bound by our pride and arrogance. We seem unable to throw off the grave clothes of the habitual patterns that negatively influence and impact our lives, finding them a most comfortable fit. We would rather cling to our fears, for they are so familiar and make such good companions. Yet, in every corner of our lives, in every shadow we fear, even unto the cold embrace of death itself, you come with the steadfast love of the Divine. You break the bonds of sin and terror, giving us new strength and hope for the journey, calling us to new life through the love and sacrifice of Christ Jesus!

The Assurance of Pardon³

Beloved faith community, hear the good news of Lent. You can put your hope and trust in God, dear friends, for God offers us a love which never fades, a life which never ends. We wait for God, and God never fails us. God's hope, God's love, God's mercy, and God's grace are forever! Our trust is in God!

Thanks be to God!

PSALM 130

ABERYSTWYTH

*From the depths we cry to you, saving Lord, our prayers received!
Who can stand the stress of sin? Those who in your grace believe!
Mark not our iniquity, lest the burden break our hearts!
Not our hearts alone, but yours, for with mercy great you are!
For the Lord our souls await! In God's word our hope is laid!
As those waiting for the dawn, yes, their patience is repaid!
Hope in God, O Israel! God, whose steadfast love is sure!
Who for us redemption brings! God, whose mercies shall endure!*

The Witness from the Gospel

JOHN 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill! Lazarus of Bethany! The village of Mary and her sister Martha! Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair! Her brother Lazarus was ill! So, the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill!" But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death! Rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it!" Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again!" The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world! But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them!" After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him!" The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right!" Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep! Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead! For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe! But let us go to him!" Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him!" When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days! Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother! When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died! But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of God!" Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again!" Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day!" Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life! Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die! Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world!" When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you!" And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!" When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved! He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see!" Jesus began to weep! So, the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone!" Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days!" Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So, they took away the stone! And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me! I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me!" When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth! Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go!" Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him!

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon
Music for Meditation
The Concerns of the Church
The Pastoral Prayer
The Lord's Prayer

An Untimely Death

Dale Bishop

**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 Receiving of Our Gifts
The Offertory
*The Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Christ all creatures here below!
Praise Holy Spirit, evermore!
Praise triune God whom we adore!*

*The Prayer of Thanksgiving
*The Closing Hymn, No. 638
*The Extinguishing of the Altar Candles
*The Procession of the Light
*The Benediction and Blessing

In the Bulb There is a Flower

PROMISE

To our guests! At your choosing, we invite you to join us in a long-standing tradition at First Congregational United Church of Christ as we form a circle as one, joining hands and singing together our Fellowship Song.

*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 Reflection

*You are invited to stand as you are able.

Lector: Doug Malinsky
Ushers: Kamie Kolb and Joe Turpin

*The color for the Sundays in Lent is Purple, symbolizing
the penitential nature of this holy season.*

***The flowers adorning the Chancel for today's worship are given in loving memory of
Caroline Klessig and her sisters from Pat and Ken Fox.***

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Timothy W. Shirley, Pastor
Debbie Brown, Church Administrator
Sharon Breit, Director of Christian Education
Lori Lee Hunter, Director of Music
Linda Brainard, Pianist
Norma Yaeger, Pianist
Christine Clough, Cleaning Service

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Scholarship, Ursula Charaf



First Congregational United Church of Christ

105 North First Street ~ PO Box 1385 ~ Eagle River, Wisconsin 54521

Website: eagleriverucc.org Church Office: 715-802-8501 E-mail: office@eagleriverucc.org

Timothy W. Shirley: pastortim@eagleriverucc.org timwshirley@gmail.com



First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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