

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.*



First Sunday in Lent

*The Lord's Day
First 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

The Gospel lection for the First Sunday in Lent always tells the story of Jesus' forty-day sojourn in the wilderness, complete with a trinitarian smorgasbord of temptations. This low point in the life of Jesus immediately follows the high of his baptism before he is driven into this wilderness exile. In the lection from the Hebrew Bible we read about a part of the aftermath of the flood, God placing a rainbow in the clouds as a promise, an eternal reminder that God would never do that again. Never! Never! Never! As we follow the themes of the Church Year during Transfiguration, this richest of seasons, it seems that we are living in the midst of a host of polarities. There are highs and lows surrounding us, behind us and ahead of us. Today, we explore life in the middle, pondering the times in our lives when we are tested, times that give us opportunities for reflection and contemplation, the introspection needed to better our lives and all our relationships, what the biblical writer describes as Kairos moments. Welcome to the sacred rhythm of Lent, a worthy discipline for every follower of Jesus!

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 *What Wondrous Love Is This?*
Chime Choir; Susan Krivichi, director

arr. Susan Geschke

The Lighting of the Altar Candles

The Gathering

The time is fulfilled! The realm of God has come near, calling us to repentance and faith! Believe the good news that brings us ever closer to God!

We gather before the God of our salvation, the One who has established a covenant with all creation!

We long for the One who leads us in the ways we should go, teaching us the pathways of the Holy!

Even as we enter the wilderness of the forty days of Lent, God goes before us, leading us in paths of steadfast love and faithfulness!

Let us worship God!

The Introit, No. 134 (*Chalice Praise*); general verse and first Sunday in Lent verse Marty Haugen

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of our salvation, we have gathered in this sacred setting to worship you this day, to celebrate the good news of God in this holy place; we give you thanks for the ancient covenant established with our ancestors; we thank you for remembering us even when we have forgotten you; be with us in these forty days of Lent, gracious God of steadfast love; sustain our faith when we experience the wilderness places of our lives; bringing us ever closer to you in these precious moments together; 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. 618 *How Firm a Foundation* FOUNDATION

*The Litany of Praise

To you, O Lord, we lift our souls, placing our trust in the God of our salvation!

Those who wait upon the Holy will not be put to shame, their enemies never allowed to triumph over them!

Make known your ways, leading us in the ways of the Holy, teaching us the paths that lead to your truth!

For you are the One who is compassionate and faithful, the One for whom we wait the whole day long!

Good and upright is the Holy One, instructing all humanity in the way of God, the law leading the humble in righteousness!

For the paths of the Holy One are steadfast love and faithfulness, guiding those who keep the sacred covenant, the holy decrees of God! 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

In our day, we cannot escape temptation, for it comes in so many forms, from so many sources. As Jesus was tempted, so are we. The difference is that we are prone to yield to our alluring temptations, and Jesus did not. Sometimes we fail to recognize the wrongs we have committed, sins of commission and omission. We seek to recall them now even as we seek 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,

Have mercy on this our church when we forget the sacred covenant into which you call us. How often we muddle along in our self-serving schemes rather than waiting on your word. It is far easier to follow the paths of least resistance without seeking your higher calling, honoring the better way you have placed before us. In our busyness, we sometimes forget our baptism, a sign of our participation in a beloved faith community built on trust and forgiveness. When we fall into our pedestrian routines, we turn from a vision of heaven to the treacherous hell of our own making, our own competing egos. We turn to you this day to lead us to a new day, according to your high standards. Forgive us, we pray, and turn our internal storms into rainbows of your steadfast love.

The Assurance of Pardon³

Beloved faith community, hear the good news of Lent! God is faithful to keep the everlasting covenant even when we forget that sacred trust. In mercy and steadfast love, God lifts us above the foolishness of our youth and the transgressions that diminish our humanity. Christ brings us to God that we might receive a new spirit and a clean slate. We are the beloved children of God, welcomed into the eternal realm of God right here, right now, in the midst of life. Good news is all around us! Accept the good news this day!

Thanks be to God!

The Time for the Children

Tobi Johannsen

The Witness from the Hebrew Bible

GENESIS 9:8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all

the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood! Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth!” And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life! Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” So, God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth!”

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

Thanks be to God!

The Response: PSALM 25:1-10

NEW BRITAIN

*To you, O Lord, we lift our souls, in you, our God, we trust!
Let vanity be put to shame, and languish in the dust!*

*Make us to know your paths, our God, and lead us in your way!
To learn your saving truth our hearts shall meditate each day!*

*The Lord is goodness, truth, and love, a path the saints have trod!
And children of the covenant still walk beside their God!*

*Be mindful of your mercy, Lord, your love from ages past!
Forgive the weakness of our youth and bring us home at last!*

The Witness from the Gospels

MARK 1:9-15

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove! And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love! With you I am well pleased!” At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The realm of God has come near! Repent and believe the good news!”

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Anthem

Lord, I Stretch My Hands to You
Chancel Choir

Jay Althouse

The Sermon

Wilderness Rainbows!

Timothy W. Shirley

The Hymn, No. 211

Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley

LONESOME VALLEY

The Concerns of the Church
The Pastoral Prayer
The 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 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.180 *Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days* ST. FLAVIAN

*The Benediction and Blessing

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, 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: Marilyn Preisler

Ushers: Carolton Schroeder and Joe Turpin

The flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given by Marilyn Preisler.

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

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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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