

The United Church of Big Rapids
April 6, 2025
The Fifth Sunday of Lent

❖ *You are invited to stand*



Choral Introit

Welcome

Announcements

Prelude

Let Us Break Bread, by Paul Taylor

❖ **Call to Worship**

Leader: We come to worship, remembering God's goodness that has carried us and sustained us to this present moment.

People: We remember the days when God covered us in love and filled us with joy.

Leader: We come to worship, weary from stress, heavy with grief, and wondering when relief will come.

People: We long for the days God covered us in love and filled us with joy.

Leader: We come to worship to remember and remind one another that God's love has never left us, and God's joy cannot be extinguished.

People: God, restore us that we know your love and your joy once again.

Leader: We come to worship and remember and become the Body of Christ, a community called to restore the world around us.

People: God, empower us to be your restoration people who fill the world with love, laughter and abundant life. Amen.

❖ **Prayer of Confession**

Holy One, Creator of this precious world and all its precious peoples, we confess our hesitation to walk in your way: You offer abundance; yet we fear scarcity. You create diversity; yet we cling to division. You call for justice; yet we prefer privilege. You reach out in love; yet we fail to welcome the stranger. You preach peace and mutuality; yet we worship war and domination. You lead us in truth; yet we pursue a path paved with lies, averting our eyes from the glaring reality of our complicity in the suffering of so many.

Forgive us, O God, and renew in us your holy love! Help us to see you in the pain-bearing, truth-telling, other-embracing, bread-breaking, joy-sharing, circle-widening

work to which you have called us. Then grant us the strength to take up that work, again and again, for the healing of your beloved world.

❖ **Pardon**

... You are forgiven and invited to walk in God's new way.

❖ **Response**

Thanks be to God! Let us face this day with courage and compassion, trusting in God's promise, embracing God's call, and following God's lead.

❖ **Hymn #483**

Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above, tune: Mit Freuden zart

Scripture Lesson

Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah 43:16-21

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
¹⁷ who brings out chariot and horse,
army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
¹⁸ Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
²⁰ The wild animals will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
²¹ the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

Psalms Reading

Psalms 126

¹ When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
'The LORD has done great things for them.'

³ The LORD has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵ May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Leader: This is what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

People: Thanks be to God.

Chancel Choir Anthem

There Is Love, by R. Kevin Boesiger

Sermon

Laughter in Lent? - Rev. Devon Herrell

Sharing of our Joys & Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Choral Amen

Call to Offering

Offertory

Reflection, by Claud Debussy

❖ **Doxology**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.

❖ **Prayer of Dedication**

Holy One, bless these gifts and our lives, that we and our offerings may serve your purposes. Amen.

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Invitation to the Lord's Table

The Great Thanksgiving

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

People: It is right to give thanks and praise.

Leader: Until your promised day, we will seek, saying:

People: Our Father/Creator, who is in heaven, hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom/kin_dom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom/kin_dom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sharing of the Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: Let us pray -

People: Thank you for nourishing our curiosity alongside our spirit and our conviction. May we always seek you the way you seek after us. With grateful hearts we pray, Amen.

Hymn #367

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love, tune: Chereponi

Benediction

Choral Benediction

Postlude

How Majestic Is Your Name!, by Lani Smith



Welcome to our visitors today! We're glad you chose to worship with us! Please be sure to sign the attendance sheet with your name and email/address in the pew in front of you. We like to keep up with those that visit us.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Staff update – We have a new custodian for the church, Larry Carnes, who started on March 24. He will be working part-time evenings and weekends to maintain our building. You can leave a message for Larry at the church office if you notice particular items which need custodial attention. Thank you to Erin Dumond for serving as our custodian these past months. We appreciate your efforts every week!!

Give to the Pantry! Project Starburst continues to have a high demand for food. The Mission Commission's "Give to the Pantry" program has identified baking mixes (cookies, muffins, cakes) as the "food of the month" for April. With the demand, any non-perishable food item is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your continued, generous support.

Lenten Book Studies – There are two Lenten book studies in which you may participate during this Lenten season. The first is on THURSDAYS at the First United Methodist Church at 7:00 pm. The book is *Sacred Resistance* by Ginger Gaines-Cirelli. You may attend in person or via Zoom. Pastor Devon will lead the second study in the United Church Parlor on TUESDAY evenings, 7:00 pm. The book is *Entering the Passion of Jesus* by Amy-Jill Levine. Both courses will be for 6 weeks.

Orders for Easter lilies and spring flowers will be taken today and next Sunday during Fellowship time in the Parlor. The plants will decorate our sanctuary for Easter Sunday. Plants will be \$10 each. You may also contact the office to order yours. You may choose to take your plant(s) home or deliver them to a home-bound friend.

It's Baby Shower time! We're excited to share the baptism of Wren Helsel on Palm Sunday, April 13. We will be celebrating with a shower during Fellowship Time after worship that day. Mom Tessa has provided a wish list of small items to the planning committee. Any person who would like to contribute to the gifts for baby Wren can give their donation to Dee Van Horn, Melanie Henry, Amy Buse, or Megan Vajda. If you need to write a check, make it payable to Dee Van Horn. We are also providing a small gift to big brother, Ryland, and big sister, Ruby. Palm Sunday is a wonderful day to share in the joy of this addition to the Helsel family.

Would you like to become a member of the United Church? Pastor Devon is going to be accepting new members to the church on April 13, Palm Sunday. If you are not already a member, or have not expressed any interest, please contact the church office.

Special Offering – On Palm Sunday, April 13, we will be collection donations for the One Great Hour of Sharing special offering. We divide the offering in half and send it to each of our denominations. The UCC's portion will support the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the UCC within Love of Neighbor. Each gift for PC-USA supports efforts to relieve hunger through the Presbyterian Hunger Program, promote development through the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, and assist in areas of disaster through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Your donation will assist many people around the world.

Meijer "Simply Give" – The Meijer Simply Give program has selected Project Starburst as the recipient of funds collected from now through June 28. During this time, donations are matched by Meijer one to one. A double match day is scheduled for June 14. You may purchase Simply Give cards at the local Meijer store, or find them in the narthex after March 30. You may also give your donation directly to Diane Long at Project Starburst to turn in on the double match day.

Contacting the church office - You may contact the office at any time via email, secretary@unitedchurchbr.org or you can call **231-527-9567** between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday with questions or concerns. This phone number also accepts messages outside of regular business hours. You can also mail the office at 120 S. State Street, Big Rapids, MI 49307. You can also find information about our church on our website: www.unitedchurchbr.org or by visiting our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/UnitedBigRapids.

Pastor Devon's contact information – If you need to contact Pastor Devon, you may contact her by phone for pastoral care needs at 231-629-2302. You may also reach out via email: devonherrell@gmail.com. Pastor Devon does have another full-time job, so in-person meeting time is limited. She is generally in the office on Thursdays from 9:00 am – 11:45 am. You may contact the church office to set up an appointment.

Financial Information – The Governing Board and Treasurer are sharing this data monthly with you. If you have questions, contact Amy Buse, Treasurer, or a member of the Governing Board.

	Expenditures	Income
February 2025	\$ 11,724.33	\$ 12,159.07
Year-to-Date (Jan-Feb 2025)	\$ 53,948.62 *	\$ 40,243.38

*The expenses include the downpayment for the painting project of \$18,000

The Spiritual Life Commission

will be taking orders for Easter Lilies and Spring Flowers on April 6 and 13 to decorate the sanctuary on Easter Sunday, April 20. To order your flowers, complete this form, include payment and drop it off on the table in the narthex on Sunday or mail it to the church office.

Deadline is April 14.

Given by: _____ Phone #: _____

In Memory of: _____

Or

In Honor of: _____

Please order _____ **Easter Lilies at \$10.00 each**

_____ **Spring flowers at \$10.00 each**

Enclosed is \$ _____

_____ Deliver my flowers to a shut-in after the Easter Service

_____ I will pick up my flowers after the Easter Service

The choir thought you would like to read the words to their anthem today:

"This Is Love"

A Communion Anthem

Words and music by: R. Kevin Boesiger

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This is My body, this is My blood,
This is remembrance of what I've done.
This is My body, this is My blood, this is love.

Take this bread and remember Me.
My body was broken for you.
This cup is the covenant of my blood
Poured out for you.
This is love, this is love.

This is My body, this is My blood,
This is remembrance of what I've done.
This is My body, this is My blood, this is love.

Do this to remember, My death you proclaim.
Do this till I come back triumphant to reign.

This is My body, this is My blood,
This is remembrance of what I've done.
This is My body, this is My blood, this is love.


This is My body, this is My blood,
This is remembrance of what I've done.
This is My body, this is My blood, this is love!
This is love!




The United Church of Big Rapids

Our vision is to honor all children of God through following the way of Jesus Christ.

Our mission is to celebrate all creation as an active presence in our community, engaging in transformational worship and nurturing families and relationships, as we cultivate Jesus' justice and love.



The United Church of Big Rapids is a union of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ. It is a congregation that worships together, seeks opportunities to serve others, encourages one another to grow in intellect and spirit, strives for social justice, and fully embraces Jesus' call to love one another as God loves us.



Because we believe God's whole creation is good, blessed, and sacred, we are an open and affirming community of faith. We celebrate persons of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, family structures, faith backgrounds, abilities, and economic circumstances.

As valued members of this congregation all persons are invited to equally participate in the full life of the church - worship, sacraments, ministry, fellowship, leadership, responsibilities, sorrows, blessings, and the continued presence of Jesus Christ.



Ministers	The Body of Christ
Worship Lead.....	Rev. Devon Herrell
Administrative Assistant	Julie Cole
Organist	Paul Heidemann
Chancel Choir Director	Linda Rinehart
Chancel Choir Assistant Director.....	Katie McInnis
Bell Choir Director.....	Judy Tressler
Custodian	Larry Carnes
Nursery Attendant	Michell Kamptner
Moderator.....	Marshall Henry
Sanctuary Sound	Wayne McKay
Sound Board	Mike Rinehart
Liturgist	Kathleen Keys Singh
Ushers.....	Maxine McKay, Alice Dean, Julie Kysela
Livestream Team.....	Amy Buse, Adam Jewell, Aleah Ritzema, Wayne McKay
Technical Advisors	Amy Buse & Paul Heidemann

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