

The United Church of Big Rapids
February 16, 2025
Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

❖ *You are invited to stand*

Rejoice in that day,
and leap for joy,
for behold, your reward is great in heaven.
Luke 6:23, ESV



Choral Introit

Welcome

Announcements

Prelude

Be Thou My Vision, by Lloyd Larson

❖ Call to Worship

Leader: From the comfort of our Western homes and prosperous lives,

People: we come hungry for a better world for all.

Leader: In our society divided by power struggles and prejudice,

People: we affirm the power of Your healing love.

Leader: With the honesty of our doubts and insecurities,

People: we rejoice in Your love for each one of us; seeking Your blessing this day, to make us whole.

❖ Unison Invocation

Righteous God, you create us for community, and you commune with us. May we seek your presence anew this day and in the time to come. Help us to recognize you in the sound and feel of our own breath and in the movement or noise of those around us. Embolden us to faith that surpasses understanding and ministry that reflects radical trust in you and the path of abundance, compassion, and connection. Let our worship in song and prayer be a foreshadowing of our worship in action and witness. Transform us from despair to hope, complacency to courage, and indifference to love in your name. Amen.

❖ Hymn #464

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee, tune: Hymn to Joy

Scripture Lesson

Old Testament Lesson (from the New Revised Standard Version)

Jeremiah 17:5-10

⁵ Thus says the LORD:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the LORD.

⁶ They shall be like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see when relief comes.

They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

⁷ Blessed are those who trust in the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD.

⁸ They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

⁹ The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse—
who can understand it?

¹⁰ I the LORD test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

Gospel Lesson

Luke 6:17-26

¹⁷ He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰ Then he looked up at his disciples and said:
'Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ 'Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

²² 'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

²⁴ 'But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ 'Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶ 'Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

Chancel Choir Anthem

The Greatest Gift Is Love, by Mark Hayes

Sermon

Identity Crisis: A Level Playing Field – Rev Devon Herrell

Hymn #320

The Lone, Wild Bird, tune: Prospect

Sharing of our Joys & Concerns

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer

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.

Choral Amen

Call to Offering

Offertory

In Christ There Is No East or West, by David Dahl

❖ **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**

God of wisdom and discernment, we offer these gifts with trust in you, knowing that those who place their hope in you are like trees planted by the water, bearing fruit in every season. Bless these offerings that they may grow and flourish to bring life, healing, and renewal to others. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

❖ **Hymn #386**

O for a World, tune: Azmon

Benediction

Postlude

Recessional in C, by Josef Haydn



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.



The altar flowers today are given by Julie and Trenton Cole
in celebration of Barb's birthday. We love you!



The choir thought you might like to read the lyrics of their anthem today:

"The Greatest Gift Is Love"
by: Mark Hayes
Based on 1 Corinthians 13
©1992 by Beckenhorst Press, Inc.

Though I speak with tongues of angels, though my voice is touched with gold,
Without love each word is discord, clanging brass and cymbals bold.

Though I know as much as prophets, though my faith is strong and sure,
Without love these are as nothing, neither words nor work endure.

Though I give my goods to others, and my flesh I give to burn,
Without love each gift is worthless, till the gift of love I learn.

Love is always kind and patient, neither jealous, boastful, rude;
Neither selfish nor conceited, but with ev'ry grace imbued.

Love releases all resentment, takes no pleasure in the wrong;
Love finds truth delightful always and endures what comes along.

Though not easily offended, love is eager to forgive,
Always trusting, always hoping, precious love will always live!

In a world that is imperfect, many gifts will pass away;
Faith and hope and love are endless; these, and these alone will stay.

To a world where all is changing comes this promise from above;
Faith and hope will last forever, but the greatest gift is love.

Faith and hope will last forever, but the greatest gift is love.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 soup as the "food of the month" for February. With the demand, any non-perishable food item is greatly appreciated. The bin in the Narthex is available to accept donations.

AAUW Book Bin – AAUW is holding its annual book sale on April 11 and 12. Funds raised are used for scholarships for non-traditional students. To make the sale a success, books are needed! The bin in the Narthex is waiting for donations – books of all kinds are welcome.

AARP Tax Program Ready to Serve Mecosta County Residents – There is an AARP program in Mecosta County that can help prepare your taxes. This program is designed for taxpayers with low to moderate incomes, with special attention to those aged 60 and older. The program is run entirely by volunteers who assist clients at four centers from February 10 through April 15. Appointments are usually scheduled for one and a quarter hour and can be completed in a timely manner if the taxpayer brings all the paperwork required to prepare the return. Appointments can be scheduled by calling the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). They have a NEW number for tax scheduling – 231-349-0842 which accepts phone calls and texts.

Pub Theology – The next Pub Theology meeting will be on Tuesday, February 18 at 7:00 pm at Crankers. Join the fellowship and conversation.

Chocolate bar sales – Wayne McKay will again be assisting the 7th graders from Kelloggsville Public Schools in their quest to raise money for a day trip to Chicago. Wayne will be selling candy bars for \$1 on March 2. You may also pre-order a full box of 60 assorted flavored candy bars for \$60. Contact Wayne at 231-250-3691 or wemckay@charter.net.

Project Starburst's Annual "Souper Supper" is coming Wednesday, March 19 from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm at Three Girls Bakery. We are looking for sponsors. Forms are on the table in the narthex. Alice Bandstra and Dee Van Horn will have tickets.

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 plans to be 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
January 2025	\$ 29,211.76	\$ 22,812.39
Year-to-Date (Jan-Jan 2025)	\$ 29,211.76	\$ 22,812.39


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




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
Lead Minister	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	Erin Dumond
Moderator	Marshall Henry
Sound Board	Mike Rinehart
Liturgist	Kathleen Keys Singh
Nursery Attendant	Michell Kamptner
Ushers	Jane Grzybowski, Don Olree, Dee Van Horn
Livestream Team	Amy Buse, Adam Jewell, Aleah Ritzema, Wayne McKay
Technical Advisors	Amy Buse & Paul Heidemann

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