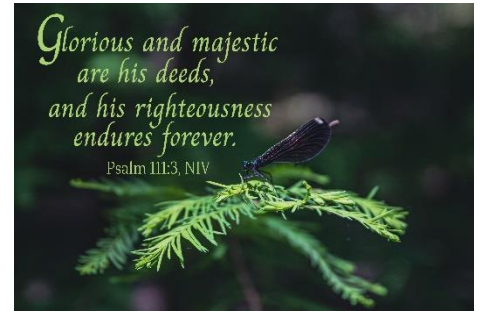


The United Church of Big Rapids  
January 28, 2024  
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

❖ *You are invited to stand*



**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Choral Introit**

**Prelude**

*Prelude in G Major, by F. Mendelssohn, arr. by Lani Smith*

❖ **Call to Worship** *(from Psalm 111)*

Leader: Praise the Lord!

**People: I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.**

Leader: Great are the works of the Lord!

**People: Full of honor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds;**

Leader: The Lord is gracious and merciful.

**People: He provides food for those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant. He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.**

Leader: God has sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name.

As a community of believers let us come together singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and listening to the telling of all your wondrous deeds, and learn the lessons of faithful living.

❖ **Hymn #473**

*For the Beauty of the Earth, tune: Dix*

**Invocation**

**Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: We come together this morning to hear your word and sing your praises. In this time of communal worship, let us put aside our individual concerns and open our minds and hearts to the words of old, your words, which remain steady, ever the truth, and ever a lesson for us. As your children, teach us through your word this morning that we may grow closer to you and become loving children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.**

## Call to Confession

Leader: God's love has been poured into our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The proof of God's amazing love is this: while we were sinners Christ died for us. Because we have faith in him, we dare to approach God in confidence to confess our sins beginning with a silent moment to reflect on our shortcomings.

**People: Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep. We have followed the devices and desires of our hearts too much. We have offended against Your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is nothing good in us. O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore those who are penitent; according to Your promises declared unto all who are in Christ Jesus our Lord. Grant that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life; to the glory of God's name. Amen.**

## Assurance of Pardon

Leader: Siblings in Christ – Hear the good news! Christ died for us. Christ rose for us. Christ reigns in power for us. Christ prays for us. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun.

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel: In Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

**People: Thanks be to God!**

## Passing of the Peace

Leader: Jesus said to his disciples, "In peace I come. My peace I give you." Please turn now to each other and offer the peace of Christ. Peace be with you.

## Scripture Lesson

*Hebrew Lesson (from the Revised Standard Version Bible)*

*Deuteronomy 18:15-20*

<sup>15</sup> The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. <sup>16</sup> This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: 'If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.' <sup>17</sup> Then the LORD replied to me: 'They are right in what they have said. <sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. <sup>19</sup> Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. <sup>20</sup> But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.'

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

**People: Thanks be to God.**

*Gospel Lesson*

*Mark 1:21-28*

<sup>21</sup> They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. <sup>22</sup> They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup> Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, <sup>24</sup> and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' <sup>25</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' <sup>26</sup> And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. <sup>27</sup> They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.' <sup>28</sup> At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

**Chancel Choir Anthem**

*Always By Our Side, by Mark Burrows, arr. by Mary McDonald*

**Sermon**

*The Demons Within – Mr. Bob MacCord*

**Hymn #403**

*What a Friend We Have in Jesus, tune: Converse*

**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**

*Intermezzo, by Franklin Rizzo*

❖ **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**

**We thank you Lord and praise you for the many blessings we have received from thy bounty. Now we return this portion of our earnings that your work may continue to be done, wherever there is a need. We pray in gratitude through our redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen**

❖ **Hymn #555**

*Now Thank We All Our God, tune: Nun danket alle Gott*

❖ **Benediction**

**Choral Benediction**

**Postlude**

*Enter His Courts With Praise, by Gregg Sewell*



**The choir thought you might like to see the words for today's anthem:**

"Always By Our Side

Music by: Mark Burrows

Arranged by: Mary McDonald

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Father, hear the prayer we offer: not for ease our prayer shall be,  
but for strength that we may ever live our lives courageously.  
Be our strength in times of weakness, in our wand'rings, be our guide;  
through each danger and endeavor, be always by our side.

Not forever in green pastures do we ask our way to be,  
but the steep and rugged pathway, may we walk rejoicingly.  
Be our strength in times of weakness, in our wand'rings be our guide;  
through each danger and endeavor, be always by our side.

Not for ever by still waters would we idly rest and stay,  
but would draw the living fountains from the rocks along our way.  
Be our strength in times of weakness, in our wand'rings be our guide;  
through each danger and endeavor, be always by our side.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Welcome back** to the United Church, Bob MacCord! We're glad to have you here. Thank you for sharing your message with us.

**Give to the Pantry!** Project Starburst continues to have a high demand for food. The Mission Commission "Give to the Pantry" program has identified fruits as the "food of the month" for January. With the demand, any non-perishable food item is also greatly appreciated. The bin in the Narthex is available to accept donations.

**Elevator work** has begun! The elevator upgrade work is expected to take four (4) weeks. During that time, there will be NO elevator service in our building. Access via the parking lot is still possible. The doors on the Mill Street side of the church will be unlocked during business hours and on Sunday morning. If you need accommodation, please contact the church office to make arrangements. We appreciate your patience as we get this much-needed, important repair to our elevator.

**Free Income Tax Service Preparation Program** - Well, it is just about that time of year again when we all begin thinking about filing our income tax. The AARP Foundation Tax Aide Program is back to normal this year, and all returns will be completed in one session. This is a free income tax preparation program designed for taxpayers with low and moderate incomes, with special attention to those who are 60 or older. The program is run entirely by volunteers who will be assisting clients at four (4) centers from February 5 through April 15, 2024. Morton Township Hall, Mecosta; The Salvation Army on Linden Street, Big Rapids; Morton Township Library, Mecosta; and Wheatland Township Library, Remus. (All sites have various days and hours available. To schedule an appointment call RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) at 231-796-4848 Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. For questions, contact Bruce Fredrick at 313-618-4825.

**Book Collection for AAUW Book Sale** - The Big Rapids chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) is collecting gently used books, CDs, and DVDs for its annual book sale. Donation bins are located at Artworks, the Mecosta County Visitors Bureau, Immanuel Lutheran Church, First United Methodist Church, the United Church of Big Rapids, Conley's Bakery, Canadian Lakes Pharmacy, and Antlers Fireside Grill. Please, no textbooks or encyclopedias. The sale will be held Friday, March 22 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Saturday, March 23 from 9:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 304 Elm Street, Big Rapids. Proceeds will fund scholarships for nontraditional Ferris students. For more information, call 614-282-4396.

**Spaces are available** to sign up to provide altar flowers or host fellowship time/coffee hour for the next two months. See the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board.

**Contacting the church office** - You may contact the office at any time via email, [secretary@unitedchurchbr.org](mailto: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.

**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
December 2023	\$ 43,492	\$ 11,839
Year-to-Date (Jan-Dec 2023)	\$269,493	\$255,548*

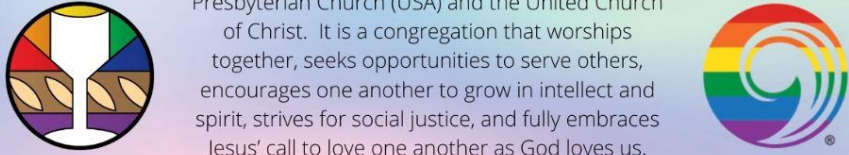
This includes \$35,220.92 we received from the Employee Retention Tax Credit Program (ERTC) along with \$30,919 in donations for the elevator



# 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
Guest Minister .....	Mr. Bob MacCord
Administrative Assistant .....	Julie Cole
Organist .....	Paul Heidemann
Chancel Choir Director .....	Linda Rinehart
Chancel Choir Assistant Director .....	Katie McInnis
Christian Education Program Director .....	Amanda Little
Bell Choir Director .....	Judy Tressler
Moderator .....	Marshall Henry
Member in Charge .....	Erin Dumond
Sound Board .....	Trish McHugh
Sanctuary Sound .....	Wayne McKay
Liturgist .....	Jim Bandstra
Ushers .....	Paul Challender, Dee Van Horn, Bruce Fredrick
Livestream Team .....	Amy Buse, Annie Ducat, Wayne McKay
Technical Advisors .....	Amy Buse & Paul Heidemann

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