

**The United Church of Big Rapids**  
**March 23, 2025**  
**The Third Sunday of Lent**

❖ *You are invited to stand*



**Choral Introit**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Prelude**

*If You Will Trust in God to Guide You, arr. by Michael Cox*

❖ **Call to Worship**

Leader: You who are thirsty:

**People: Come to receive living water.**

Leader: Those who are hungry:

**People: Taste the bread that satisfies.**

Leader: You who long for connection:

**People: Receive the fellowship of this community, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.**

Leader: You who search for love:

**People: Experience the love of Jesus expressed in music, prayer, community, word, and action.**

Leader: May this time of worship fill and refresh you.

**People: Let us worship God together!**

❖ **Unison Invocation**

**Holy One, draw us into community and connection. Let us receive you here with heartfelt gratitude and celebrate our companions in worship with affirmation and trust. Keep us open to the unexpected, so that we may perceive your work in the world and your work in us. Forgive us also, when we doubt that we can be worthy followers of you. May we be inspired to see your kin\_dom, nurture your people, and grow into the fullness of stature in your image. Amen.**

❖ **Hymn #457** (vss. 1,3,4,5 only)

*I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art, tune" Toulon*

## Scripture Lesson

### *Old Testament Lesson*

*Isaiah 55:1-9*

Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.

<sup>4</sup> See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.

<sup>5</sup> See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,  
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;

<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup>He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? <sup>3</sup>No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup>Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup>No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup>So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" <sup>8</sup>He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup>If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down." '

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

People: **Thanks be to God.**

### Chancel Choir Anthem

*My Jesus, I Love Thee, arr. by Paul Sjolund*

### Sermon

*Providentially Speaking – Rev. David Wheeler*

### 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

*Consider the Lilies, by Terry Osman*

### ❖ 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**

**Dear God, take these offerings of treasure, and our lives, to use for your purposes in the world. With them, may this church be empowered to be like water for the thirsty, bread for the hungry, love for the stranger, and merciful in grace for all. Amen.**

❖ **Hymn #340**

*Eternal Light, Shine in My Heart, tune: Jacob*

**Benediction**

**Choral Benediction**

**Postlude**

*Wonderful Grace of Jesus, by Robert W. Thygerson*



**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**

**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 noodles/pasta as the "food of the month" for March. With the demand, any non-perishable food item is greatly appreciated. The bin in the Narthex is available to accept donations.

**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.

**Pub Theology** – The March session of Pub Theology will be on Monday, March 24 at Crankers, 7:00 pm. Please join us for fellowship and discussion – all are welcome.

**40 Days of Kindness Challenge** – The First United Methodist Church has shared their Lenten activity with us – the 40 Days of Kindness Challenge. The challenge is an opportunity to grow in faith by putting kindness into action, embracing justice, and caring for oneself along the way. It provides suggested activities for each day during Lent for the three focus areas – kindness, justice, and self-care. It is an interesting way to use the 40 days of Lent in a meaningful way. Copies are available in the Narthex or online at [www.ummecosta.org/40days](http://www.ummecosta.org/40days).

**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.

**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.

**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. You can also find information about our church on our website: [www.unitedchurchbr.org](http://www.unitedchurchbr.org) or by visiting our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/UnitedBigRapids](http://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](mailto: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

**Here is today's Chancel Choir anthem. They thought you would like to see the words:**

"My Jesus, I Love Thee"  
Arranged by: Paul Sjolund  
© 1987 Hinshaw Music, Inc.

My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine;  
For thee all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art thou:  
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love thee because thou hast first loved me,  
And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree.  
I love thee for wearing the thorns on thy brow:  
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight  
I'll ever adore thee in heaven so bright;  
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow:  
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.


My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art thou:  
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.  
My Jesus, 'tis now.




## 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. David Wheeler
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
Nursery Attendant .....	Michell Kamptner
Moderator.....	Marshall Henry
Sanctuary Sound .....	Wayne McKay
Sound Board .....	Mike Rinehart
Liturgist .....	Kathleen Keys Singh
Ushers.....	Jane Grzybowski, Paul Challender, Maxine McKay
Fellowship Hosts.....	Marshall & Melanie Henry
Livestream Team.....	Amy Buse, Adam Jewell, Aleah Ritzema, Wayne McKay
Technical Advisors .....	Amy Buse & Paul Heidemann

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