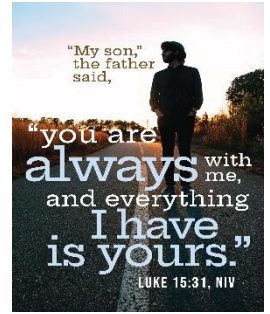


**The United Church of Big Rapids**  
**March 30, 2025**  
**The Fourth Sunday of Lent**

❖ *You are invited to stand*



**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Prelude**

*Be Thou My Vision, arr. by Ben Logan*

❖ **Call to Worship**

Leader: How blessed we are that God forgives us and loves us!

**People: For all those times when we have fallen short of what God would have us be, we have been forgiven.**

Leader: God makes us new in God's Spirit!

**People: Now is the time to joyfully accept the newness of life which God offers to us.**

Leader: Come, let us worship and be thankful.

**People: Let us open our hearts to the peace and joy of God. Amen.**

❖ **Unison Invocation**

**O holy One, your gifts are generous and yet we often fail to appreciate what we have been given. We demand more, but squander what we have received. Forgive us for taking for granted what we receive from you. When we fail to accept what you offer, or fail to steward those gifts, bring us back to awareness of you. However far we wander, bring us back to you, to enfold us in love and grace. In the name of Jesus, Amen.**

❖ **Hymn #376**

*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling, tune: Hyfrydol*

**Scripture Lesson**

*New Testament Lesson*

*2 Corinthians 5:16-21*

<sup>15</sup>And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

<sup>16</sup> From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal

through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

*Gospel Lesson*

*Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32*

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

<sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable:

Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup> When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.' " <sup>20</sup> So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> 'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup> He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." <sup>28</sup> Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" <sup>31</sup> Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." '

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

**People:** **Thanks be to God.**

**Sermon**

*Two Lost Sons – Rev. Forrest Hoppe*

**Hymn #280**

*Amazing Grace, tune: Amazing Grace*

**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**

*Reflection, by Robert Schumann*

❖ **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**

**Gracious God, we give you thanks for all the gifts we receive from you and pray you receive our gifts for your kingdom. May they be a blessing and gift in our extended community and the world. Amen.**

# My Life Flows on in Endless Song

(How Can I Keep from Singing)

Ps. 46:1-7; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:17

Anon. in Bright Jewels for the Sunday School,  
ed. Robert Lowry, 1869; alt.  
St. 3, Doris Plenn, c. 1957

1 My life flows on in end - less song; a - bove earth's lam - en -  
 2 What though my joys and com - forts die? My Sav - ior still is  
 3 When ty - rants trem - ble, sick with fear, and hear their death knells  
 4 I lift my eyes; the cloud grows thin; I see the blue a -



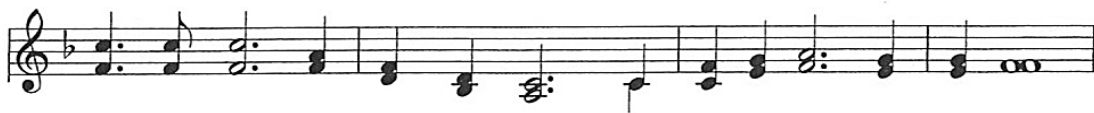
ta - tion, I hear the sweet, though far - off hymn that  
 liv - ing. What though the shad - ows gath - er 'round? A  
 ring - ing; When friends re - joice both far and near, how  
 bove it; And day by day this path - way smooths, since



hails a new cre - a - tion. Through all the tu - mult  
 new song Christ is giv - ing. No storm can shake my  
 can I keep from sing - ing? In pris - on cell and  
 first I learned to love it The peace of Christ makes



and the strife, I hear the mu - sic ring - ing; It  
 in - most calm, while to that Rock I'm cling - ing; Since  
 dun - geon vile our thoughts to them are wing - ing; When  
 fresh my heart, a foun - tain ev - er spring - ing; All



finds an ech - o in my soul— how can I keep from sing - ing?  
 Love com - mands both heaven and earth, how can I keep from sing - ing?  
 friends by shame are un - de - filed, how can I keep from sing - ing?  
 things are mine since I am Christ's— how can I keep from sing - ing?

## Benediction

## Postlude

*March, by Garret Parker*



**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**

**Welcome back** to the United Church Rev. Hoppe! We're glad to see you and have you lead us in worship today!

**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 noodles/pasta as the "food of the month" for March. For April, the food of the month will be baking mixes (cookies, muffins, cakes). With the demand, any non-perishable food item is greatly appreciated.

**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.

**The Spring Adopt-a-Highway** is scheduled for April 5, beginning at 9:00 am. We will meet at the church for a safety briefing, pick up our gear and head to our stretch of the highway. Please invite friends to this worthwhile event! If you have any questions, contact Susan H. Grant at [adonaldgrant73@gmail.com](mailto:adonaldgrant73@gmail.com).

**Orders for Easter lilies and spring flowers** will be taken on April 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 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 elect 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 an 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](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







## 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. Forrest Hoppe                                |
| 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 .....                     | Randy Vance                                       |
| Liturgist .....                       | Dee Van Horn                                      |
| Ushers.....                           | Paul Challender, Jim Bandstra, Alice Bandstra     |
| Livestream Team.....                  | Amy Buse, Adam Jewell, Aleah Ritzema, Wayne McKay |
| Technical Advisors .....              | Amy Buse & Paul Heidemann                         |

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