



CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 N. CLINTON ST.
IOWA CITY, IA 52245
30 319-337-4301

WORSHIP FOR MARCH 1, 2026
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Today is a communion Sunday. If you are joining us online, you are invited to get whatever you eat and whatever you drink before the beginning of worship. It can be bread and grape juice or wine or as simple as a cracker or rice cake and water for use in our worship.

“The winds of grace are blowing, but it is you who must raise your sails.”
Rabindranath Tagore

PRELUDE “Siciliana” William Walond

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nathan Peters, Liturgist

CHORAL INTROIT

***CALL TO WORSHIP (from Psalm 105)**

Let the hearts of those who seek God rejoice.

Turn for help to God, who is your strength

[Unison]

and seek God's presence always.

Let us worship God.

***HYMN 483 "Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above"**

Sing praise to God who reigns above,

the God of all creation,

the God of power, the God of love,

the God of our salvation.

With healing balm my soul is filled

and every faithless murmur stilled:

To God all praise and glory!

What God's almighty power hath made

God's gracious mercy keepeth;

By morning glow or evening shade

God's watchful eye ne'er sleepeth;

Within the kingdom of God's might,

Lo! all is just and all is right:

To God all praise and glory!

The Lord is never far away,

but through all grief distressing,

an ever present help and stay,

our peace and joy and blessing.

As with a mother's tender hand,

God gently leads the chosen band:

To God all praise and glory!

***OPENING PRAYER**

As this day and week begin, O God, help us to see the new things you are doing in our lives and in the world. When we are worn out by what is immediately in front of us, lift our eyes toward the horizon, that we might see the possibility of your realm before us. When we are held back by what we have done or failed to do, remind us of your forgiveness and put a new spirit within us. When we are unsure of where we are going, give us strength to follow in the ways of Jesus Christ. Accept our prayers and our worship as you have accepted us. Amen.

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#483, vs. 4)**

Thus all my gladsome way along,

I sing aloud thy praises,

that all may hear the grateful song

my voice unwearied raises.

**Be joyful in the Lord, my heart,
both soul and body bear your part:
To God all praise and glory!**

ANTHEM “Jesus the Very Thought of Thee” Mark Hayes

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory “Adagio” John Alcock

*Response

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Christ, all creatures here below,
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.**

*Prayer of Dedication

(Children are dismissed to Children’s Church)

SCRIPTURE LESSON Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

PSALM 107:1-3, 17-22

Give thanks to the Lord, who is good,
whose mercy endures forever.

**Let all those whom the Lord has redeemed proclaim
that the Lord redeemed them from the hand of the foe.**

God gathered them out of the lands;
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.

**Some were fools and took to rebellious ways;
they were afflicted because of their sins.**

They abhorred all manner of food
and drew near to death's door.

**Then in their trouble they cried to the Lord,
who delivered them from their distress.**

God sent forth a word to heal them
and saved them from the grave.

**Let them give thanks for the mercy of God,
for the wonders the Lord does for all people.**

[Unison]

**Let them offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving
and recount the deeds of God with shouts of joy.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, “You must be born from above.” The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can these things be?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

‘Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

SERMON “A Puzzling Encounter with Jesus”

THE LORD’S SUPPER

INVITATION

HYMN (insert) “As the Wind Song Through the Trees”

**As the wind song through the trees,
as the stirring of the breeze,
so it is with the Spirit of God,
 as the heart made strangely warm,
 as the voice within the storm,
so it is with the Spirit of God.**

**Never seen, ever known
where this wind has blown
bringing life, bringing power to the world,**

**as the dancing tongues of fire,
as the soul's most deep desire,
so it is with the Spirit of God.**

**As the rainbow after rain,
as the hope that's born again,
so it is with the Spirit of God,
as the green in the spring,
as a kite on a string,
so it is with the Spirit of God,
making worlds that are new,
making peace come true,
bringing gifts, bringing love to the world,
as the rising of the yeast,
as the wine at the feast,
so it is with the Spirit of God.**

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

WORDS OF INSTITUTION AND REMEMBERING

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest...

We thank you God, that with this bread, you offer us the nourishment we need, a reminder of the sacred deep within our being. With this cup, you offer us the wholeness that we seek, an invitation to live fully.

SHARING OF BREAD AND CUP

(Communion elements are served in the pews. Please receive the bread or cup as they are offered to you by a deacon. Hold it until all have been served, and we will eat and drink together at the minister's guidance. We serve grape juice, not wine. Gluten-free wafers are on the trays with the bread. In the Congregational United Church of Christ, we celebrate the Lord's Supper with openness and welcome. Everyone is invited to the table, regardless of church membership or denominational affiliation.)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**We give thanks, almighty God,
that you have refreshed us at your table.
Strengthen our faith,
increase our love for one another,
and send us forth into the world in courage and peace,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
through Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*HYMN 274 "O God of Earth and Space"

**O God of earth and space,
Of sea and fire and air,**

**Your providence surrounds us here
And everywhere.
In fruit and grain and tree,
In shelter from the cold,
In cooling breezes, flowing wells,
Now as of old.**

**Where faithfulness is shown,
Where love and truth abound,
Where beauty graces human life,
There You are found.
Inspirer of all thought!
Creative force of art!
The melody on every tongue,
In every heart!**

**Wherever freedom reigns,
Where sin is overthrown,
Where justice fused with mercy rules,
There You are known.
Give us the courage clear
To make the earth a home
For all to live in harmony
In Christ's shalom.**

**Your word commands response
And summons us to life.
We follow, strengthened by Your grace,
In calm or strife.
Our ever-present help,
Our challenge and our prod,
We praise You now and to life's end
Eternal God.**

***BENEDICTION AND CHORAL RESPONSE**

POSTLUDE "Fugue" in A Minor John James

Cover Art: JESUS MAFA. Nicodemus, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48385> [retrieved February 25, 2026]. Original source: <http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr> (contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>). Used with permission. JESUS MAFA is a response to the New Testament by a Christian community in Cameroon, Africa. Here we see Jesus patiently teaching a perplexed Nicodemus, whose hands are in a gesture of questioning.

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Minister:	The Rev. Bill Lovin
Director of Christian Education:	Hope Spragg
Organist:	Bill Crouch
Choir Director	Dr. Chris Nakielski
Children’s Choir Director	Rachel Burchett
Office Manager	Nancy LeaVesseur

TODAY

❖ Choir Rehearsal	9:00 am
Christian Education for All Ages	9:15 am
Worship Service	10:15 am
Coffee Hour	After Worship

TUESDAY

❖ Gentle Yoga	11:00 am
Board of Christian Education	6:00 pm
Mission Board	7:00 pm
Stewardship Board (Zoom)	7:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

❖ Staff Meeting	11:00 am
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THURSDAY

❖ Prairie Piffari Rehearsal	6:30 pm
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NEXT SUNDAY

❖ Choir Rehearsal	9:00 am
Christian Education for All Ages	9:15 am
Worship Service	10:15 am
Coffee Hour	After Worship

WE’RE GLAD THAT YOU HAVE JOINED US FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING.

Everyone is invited to Coffee Hour in Rockwood Hall after worship.

ADULT EDUCATION IN MARCH—ENCOUNTERS AT THE TOMB: As we move through Lent this month, the 9:15 Sunday morning adult education sessions will explore the

resurrection stories in the four Gospels. Each Gospel gives a different account, but all of them point to encounters that women and men had with one another, with various messengers of good news, and with the risen Christ. We'll look at these connections as we seek new understanding of the resurrection for our lives today.

March 1	Matthew, chapter 28
March 8	Mark, chapter 16
March 15	Luke, chapter 24
March 22	John, chapter 20
March 29	General Discussion

Join Bill Lovin around the fireplace in Rockwood Hall.

DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS ON SUNDAY, MARCH 8. Please remember to set your clock ahead one hour on Saturday evening, March 7, so that you get to church on time.

THE WOMEN'S READING GROUP—MARCH 14: The Women's Reading Group are reading and discussing *Holy Envy -Finding God in the Faith of Others* by Barbara Brown Taylor. We'll meet from 10-11am in Rockwood Hall the second Saturday of each month through June. If you're interested, contact Marsha Lowe or Rebecca Weatherford or sign-up in Rockwood Hall.

AFTER WORSHIP ENCOUNTER (AWE) WILL START UP AGAIN AFTER WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, MARCH 15. We will plan on two multi-week sessions. We will meet for 3 weeks and then take a break on Easter Sunday, April 5. Generally, we gather on the Sundays that the choir meets after worship to rehearse for their Special Music Sunday on May 31.

We will be using *Living the Questions: The Wisdom of Progressive Christianity*. In this study we will be meeting again progressive theologians that were introduced in the original Living the Questions series: Borg, Crossen, and Spong. This is a beginning class that will introduce you to Progressive Christianity.

Rev. Ann Molsberry will be leading the discussions. Please purchase your own book and for Sunday, March 15 read Chapter 8: Restoring Relationships (the first chapter of Section Two: Reconciliation). See you on Sunday, March 15 in the library!

OUR NEXT HOPE LODGE DINNER will be Monday, March 16 at 6:00 p.m. If you would like to donate to the meal, see the signup sheet in Rockwood Hall.

The American Cancer Society Hope Lodge, which opened in 2008, offers 28 guest rooms located near treatment centers in the area. The program provides a free home away from home for cancer patients and their caregivers. More than just a roof over their heads, it's a nurturing community that helps patients access the care they need. Each Hope Lodge community offers a supportive, homelike environment where guests can share a meal, join in the evening's activities, or unwind in their own private room. Patients staying at a Hope Lodge must be in active cancer treatment.

YOU CAN HELP WITH THE FREE LUNCH PROGRAM THIS MONTH: The Free Lunch Program is continuing to serve lunches. Members of Congregational UCC serve on the fifth Monday of any month. Our next serving date is Monday, March 30. If you are interested in helping in any way, please contact Vicki Thomae or call the church office—319-337-4301.

THE SHELTER HOUSE BOOK SALE will be held March 28 & 29 at 860 Quarry Road, Coralville from 10:30am-4:00pm both days. You can bring your donations of donations of books, CDs, DVDs, and puzzles to that location every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from 10:00am-2:00pm, and Sundays from 2:00pm-4:00pm. Or drop your donations off in Rockwood Hall and we'll take them for you.

Many volunteers are needed to help sort books and help during sale days. Sign up to volunteer at: [Book Sale 2026: Community Volunteers](#).

IMPORTANT DATES IN LENT AND EASTER

- **March 1**—Second Sunday in Lent; Communion Sunday
- **March 29**—**Palm Sunday**—Worship with Distribution of Palms; One Great Hour of Sharing Offering
- **April 2**—**Maundy Thursday**—Worship in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.; Communion and Service of Tenebrae
- **April 3**—**Good Friday**—Worship in the Sanctuary at Noon
- **April 5**—**Easter Sunday**—Easter Sunrise Service led by members of the Confirmation Class at 7:30 a.m. Breakfast follows in Rockwood Hall; Festival Easter Service in the Sanctuary at 10:15 a.m.

MISSION BOARD LGBTQ+ SUBCOMMITTEE is looking forward to a year of learning, advocating and activism. Join us and mark your calendars for the following dates:

Friday, May 1: Rainbow Graduation for the Pride Alliance Center- afternoon graduation ceremony for LGBTQ+ students will be held at our church. Details and opportunities to help will be announced soon.

Saturday, June 20: Iowa City Pridefest- 11:30am-4pm parade and booth shift opportunities will be available.

USED MEDICINE BOTTLES NEEDED FOR REUSE IN CLINICS: 100 Grannies, a local environmental activist group, is sending used plastic medicine bottles to Africa to assist clinics in distributing medication. Donna Hirst is in charge of this project and would be pleased to have participation from members of the congregation. If you are interested, the labels from the plastic bottles need to be removed, and the bottles need to be washed in soapy water. More information will be in the church newsletter. Donna will pick up bottles on Sundays.

CARBON OFFSET HELPS HABITAT FOR HUMANITY: Have you ever wanted to compensate for CO2 emissions from a flight or other carbon intensive activity? Carbon offsets are a recognized way to make an activity carbon neutral. Carbon offsets are also often viewed with skepticism due to concerns about whether the money given is truly decreasing carbon emissions and whether the action would have happened without the donation.

Those concerns can be assuaged with a donation to put solar arrays on Habitat for Humanity homes. The homeowners do not have the resources to make an upfront investment in a solar array and once installed the system is likely to stay in place for the lifetime of the panels. In

addition to reducing CO2 emissions the donor would be helping a low income Iowa family with their energy bills.

To estimate your flight emissions and send an offset to Iowa Valley Habitat for Humanity go to www.habitatsolar.org/. Please contact Jamie McCoy or see the bulletin board in Rockwood Hall for more information.

PLEASE HELP WITH PARKING IN THE CHURCH LOT: Several people currently have mobility issues and need to park in our small parking lot on Jefferson St. If you are able, please park elsewhere so that the marked and unmarked spaces can be used by those who need them. Thanks.

SEE SOMETHING—SAY SOMETHING: If you notice something in the building that needs attention—a leaky faucet, a loose railing, etc.—please let the church office (319-337-4301) know right away. Thanks.

USHERS, GREETERS, AND HOSPITALITY OPPORTUNITIES: There are still some opportunities to greet people coming to worship, to usher, and to provide hospitality during coffee hour after worship. Please sign up on the sheets in Rockwood Hall or call the church office--319-337-4031.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE AS A LITURGIST ON SUNDAY MORNING? This is a great opportunity to welcome people and to lead them in worship. Bill Lovin provides the material. You provide the spirit. Contact Bill if you are interested or would like more information.



Want to give online? Scan the QR code for our giving app.
Your giving makes a world of difference.

WE LIVE STREAM OUR WORSHIP SERVICES AT 10:15 ON SUNDAY MORNING.

You can join us online in real time at <https://vimeo.com/event/1424751>. This streaming address is the same each week.

RECORDINGS OF THE WORSHIP SERVICES are posted after worship on Sunday at <https://vimeo.com/channels/1547852>. The recordings remain up permanently, so you can watch past worship services at your convenience or recommend them to a friend.