



Painting from a Roman catacomb, 4th century

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

WORSHIP FOR MARCH 8, 2026
THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

PRELUDE “Air” Herbert Howells

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Tina Koepnick, Liturgist

CHORAL INTROIT

*CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 107)

Give thanks to the Lord, who is good;
whose steadfast love endures forever.

**God satisfies the thirsty,
and fills the hungry with good things.**

God turns a desert into pools of water,
a parched land into springs of water.

Let us worship God.

***HYMN 272 (vs. 1-4) “God of the Sparrow”**

God of the sparrow

God of the whale

God of the swirling stars

How does the creature say Awe

How does the creature say Praise

God of the earthquake

God of the storm

God of the trumpet blast

How does the creature cry Woe

How does the creature cry Save

God of the rainbow

God of the cross

God of the empty grave

How does the creature say Grace

How does the creature say Thanks

God of the hungry

God of the sick

God of the prodigal

How does the creature say Care

How does the creature say Life

***OPENING PRAYER**

Living God, we seek your presence now.

Our minds cannot understand you, yet our hearts rest in your love and compassion.

Our faith cannot grasp you, yet in you we live and move and have our being.

**Our way ahead into this week is hidden from us, but we trust that we go through these days
kept in your gracious care.**

Open our eyes to see the simple glories of everyday things

and renew our vision of the goodness in which our day-to-day lives are lived.

Strengthen our relationships with other people.

Help us to come to our senses so we may the know way ahead.

In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (#272, vs. 5 & 6)**

God of the neighbor

God of the foe

God of the pruning hook

How does the creature say Love

How does the creature say Peace

God of the ages

**God near at hand
God of the loving heart
How do your children say Joy
How do your children say Home**

ANTHEM “Like as the Hart” Herbert Howells

TIME OF PRAYER

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer

Prayer of our Savior

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Choral Response

SERVICE OF GIVING

Invitation

Offertory “Trio in F Major” John Stainer

*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’S MESSAGE

(Children are dismissed to Children’s Church)

SCRIPTURE LESSON John 4:5-26

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink’. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’ (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink”, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?’ Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.’

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

*PSALM HYMN 218 "New Songs of Celebration Render" (Psalm 98)

**New songs of celebration render
To God who has great wonders done;
Love sits enthroned in ageless splendor;
Come and adore the Mighty One.
God has made known the great salvation
Which all his friends with joy confess.
God has revealed to every nation
Truth and unending righteousness.**

**Joyfully, heartily resounding,
Let every instrument and voice
Peal out the praise of grace abounding,
Calling the whole world to rejoice.
Trumpets and organs, set in motion
Such sounds as make the heavens ring;
All things that live in earth and ocean,
Sound forth the song, your praises bring.**

**Rivers and seas and torrents roaring,
Honor the Lord with wild acclaim;
Mountains and stones look up adoring,
And find a voice to praise God's name.
Righteous, commanding, ever glorious,
Praises be sung that never cease;
Just is our God, whose truth victorious
Establishes the world in peace.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON John 4:27-42

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me

everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Surely no one has brought him something to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.'

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.'

SERMON "Encountering Jesus, Encountering Ourselves?"

*HYMN 434 "Today We are Called to be Disciples"

**Today we all are called to be
disciples of the Lord,
to help to set the captive free,
make plowshare out of sword,
to feed the hungry, quench their thirst,
make love and peace our fast,
to serve the poor and homeless first,
our ease and comfort last.**

**God made the world and at its birth
ordained our human race
to live as stewards of the earth,
responding to God's grace.
But we are vain and sadly proud;
we sow not peace but strife.
Our discord spreads a deadly cloud
that threatens all of life.**

**Pray justice may come rolling down
as in a mighty stream,
with righteousness in field and town
to cleanse us and redeem.
For God is longing to restore
an earth where conflicts cease,
a world that was created for
a harmony of peace.**

**May we in service to our God
act out the living word,
and walk the road the saints have trod
till all have seen and heard.
As stewards of the earth may we
give thanks in one accord
to God who calls us all to be
disciples of the Lord.**

*BENEDICTION AND CHORAL RESPONSE

POSTLUDE “Fantasia” John Stainer

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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
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THURSDAY

❖ Prairie Piffari Rehearsal	6:30 pm
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NEXT SUNDAY

❖ Choir Rehearsal	9:00 am
Adult Education/No Sunday School	9:15 am

Worship Service
Coffee Hour

10:15 am
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 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.

UCC FAMILY SURVEY: Parents with school aged children are encouraged to fill out a survey regarding the spring/summer events. Surveys may be completed via email or see Hope in Rockwood Hall after worship.

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.

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL OR CHILDREN'S CHURCH DURING WORSHIP SUNDAY, MARCH 15. Nursery is OPEN with expanded spring hours for choral music rehearsal 9AM-12:30 PM.

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.

GENTLE YOGA on Tuesday @11 will NOT meet on Tuesday, March 17 due to spring break.

ON PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 29, WE WILL DEDICATE OUR ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING (OGHS) OFFERING. This offering has long been an important part of the life of our congregation. For many years now, we have been on the list of Top 50 giving churches. One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) involves us in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, through our offering, we are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS we engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, our contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put us in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. We meet immediate needs and address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.

Let us continue this great tradition and give generously.

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 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 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.

AGUDAS ACHIM INVITES EVERYONE THEIR ANNUAL PEACE AND JUSTICE SEDER. They will be raising funds for three worthy local causes: HOPE Foundation (rebuilding life in Gaza), One Iowa (LGBTQ rights) and the Immigrant Welcome Network of Johnson County (immigrant support). Please come participate in this joyous event full of song, food and liberation based on the traditional Passover Seder meal but open to all. You can bring a non-wheat-based vegetarian or dairy dish as a potluck contribution. Sunday March 29th, Robert A. Lee Recreation Center. Doors open: 4:15 pm, Seder begins: 4:30 pm. Please register before



March 25th via the QR code.

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.