

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
January 28, 2024
United Church of Christ - Neillsville
Julie Ruegsegger

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PRELUDE Holly Pisors

RINGING OF THE CARILLON

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 111)

One: Come, and praise God! In the company of the
God's people, let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**Many: Great are the works of God, full of glory and
majesty.**

One: Our God is gracious and compassionate.

Many: Our God is merciful and forgiving

One: Our God is faithful and trustworthy,

Many: Our God is just and good.

One: So come, let's worship God together.

Many: God's praise will last forever!

INVOCATION (ALL)

**God of power and might, you sent prophets to your
people, calling us back to your covenant, and
teaching us your ways. In the fullness of time, you
sent us your Son Jesus, teaching with such authority,
that our eyes were opened to see your ways anew.
Open our hearts and minds that we may understand
and proclaim your teachings for all to hear. In Jesus'
name we pray. Amen.**

HYMN "God of Grace and God of Glory"

#436 NCH Harry Emerson Fosdick

**1 God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your power;
crown your ancient church's story;
bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.**

**2 From the evils that surround us
and assail the Savior's ways,
from the fears that long have bound us -
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.**

**3 Cure your children's warring madness;
bend our pride to your control.
Shame our reckless, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
make our broken spirits whole,
make our broken spirits whole.**

**4 Set our feet on lofty places;
gird our lives that they may be
armored with all Christ like graces,
in the fight to set us free.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
In the quest for liberty,
In the quest for liberty.**

**5 Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore;
let the search for your salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.**

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

One: God invites us to come to worship with our
whole hearts, to inventory our deeds and our works,
mindful of our covenant with God. God offers us a new
beginning day by day and week by week. Trusting in
God, we pray for transformation and new life:
**All: Holy God, we confess that we are arrogant
people – so full of "knowledge" that we hardly have
any room for love. We confess that we too often
judge when we really need to listen.**

We confess that we push people away when you call us to welcome them into our communities. We confess that we think only about protecting ourselves when we are challenged to risk everything for others. Lord, forgive us for being more concerned with “being right” than we are with “showing love”. Forgive us for demanding uniformity when you call us to celebrate diversity. Guide us, Great God, to live according to your unconditional love. Teach us to see one another as sisters and brothers, that we may learn to live as one family. Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE

One: God’s righteousness endures forever, and God is mindful of God’s covenant with us. The promises of God’s covenant of grace assure us that this day and all days we can walk in renewed faithfulness, as we witness good works and follow God’s call.

All: Thanks be to God, whose righteousness endures forever!

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Give voice to God’s love and peace; those around us need to hear the Good.

ALL: The Peace of God be with you.

All are invited to greet one another with such words as “The peace of Christ be with you,” and the response: “And also with you.”

PRAISE RESPONSE (sung twice)

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo.

Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia.

CHILDREN’S TIME

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Old Testament Lesson

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 “God will raise up a prophet”

¹⁵The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. ¹⁶This 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.” ¹⁷Then the Lord replied to me: “They are right in what they have said.

¹⁸I 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. ¹⁹Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. ²⁰But 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.”

EPISTLE LESSON

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 “Concerning Food Sacrificed to Idols”

⁸Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ²Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; ³but anyone who loves God is known by him.

⁴Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸“Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? ¹¹So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. ¹²But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

GOSPEL LESSON

Mark 1:21-28

“Jesus casts out an unclean spirit”

²¹They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.

²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an

unclean spirit,²⁴ 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."²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.²⁷ 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."²⁸ At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

SERMON "Stumbling Block or Stepping Stone?"

Julie Ruegsegger

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

UCC Statement of Faith in a Doxological Form

#885 NCH

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust your forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

HYMN "Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant?"

#539 NCH Richard Gillard

**1 Won't you let me be your servant,
let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant, too.**

**2 We are pilgrims on a journey,
we are travelers on the road;
We are here to help each other
go the mile and bear the load.**

**3 I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the shadow of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.**

**4 I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.**

**5 When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.**

MORNING PRAYERS

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

THE OFFERING SERVICE

Invitation to Generosity (Pastor)

One: Just as God's works are gracious and merciful, faithful and just, God calls us to works of grace, mercy, faithfulness and justice. The offerings we bring are a witness and a contribution to this church's works in the world. May we freely share and participate in God's work of grace and mercy, faith and justice.

Offertory *"Be Thou My Vision"*

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.**

Prayer of Dedication

All: We worship with our whole hearts, and give
with our whole hearts, remembering your covenant
with us, O God. As we share these gifts, may they
be for the work of faithful justice and gracious
mercy through your church and in your world.
Amen.

HYMN *"Called as Partners in Christ's Service"*

#495 Jane Parker Huber

**1Called as partners in Christ's service,
Called to ministries of grace,
We respond with deep commitment
Fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing,
Side by side and friend with friend,
Equal partners in our caring
To fulfill God's chosen end.**

**2Christ's example, Christ's inspiring,
Christ's clear call to work and worth,
Let us follow, never faltering,
Reconciling folk on earth.
Men and women, richer, poorer,
All God's people, young and old,
Blending human skills together
Gracious gifts from God unfold.**

**3Thus new patterns for Christ's mission,
In a small or global sense,
Help us bear each other's burdens,
Breaking down each wall or fence.
Words of comfort, words of vision,
Words of challenge, said with care,
Bring new power and strength for action,
Make us colleagues, free and fair.**

**4So God grant us for tomorrow
Ways to order human life
That surround each person's sorrow
With a calm that conquers strife.**

**Make us partners in our living,
Our compassion to increase,
Messengers of faith, thus giving
Hope and confidence and peace.**

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

JOYS AND CONCERNS

WELCOME

We welcome you to our service of worship!
We are glad that you have joined us in-person,
through the internet or on the radio.
We pray that you will hear God's call, seek to
follow Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RADIO BROADCAST

**11 AM Sunday radio broadcast on WCCN
98.5FM and 1370AM**

YouTube link for Sunday, January 28, 2024
<https://youtube.com/live/xThNuHT5IFc>

**This week's radio broadcast is sponsored
by Jim & Rosie Repinski
in "Praise of Jesus Christ"**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, January 28th – Worship

- **10 AM** Deacon – Karlene Wallace
Greeter(s)– Doris Bakker, Ellie Keller
Usher(s) – Kevin Erickson, Jenny Erickson

Tuesday, January 30th –

- **1 PM – Marge Goetsch Bible Study –**
*Will meet in the lounge of church

Coffee fellowship after worship

Sign up now on the back bulletin board for hosting future weeks.

Jan 28 – Barb Petkovsek
Feb 4 – Sharon Buddenhagen
Feb 11 – Susie Karl
Feb 18 –
Feb 25 -

Through prayer and mutual consent the Search Committee has selected Julianna (Julie) Ruegsegger as our candidate for the ministry of our church. On January 28th, Julie will conduct our Sunday Service at 10 a.m. **Following the service there will be a CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** to hear a report from the Search Committee, discuss the terms of the Call Agreement, and vote on calling Julianna Ruegsegger as our new pastor. Assuming a positive vote, we are anticipating a start date around May 1st.

Julie Ruegsegger

A lifelong resident of Monticello, WI, Julie Ruegsegger was raised on the family dairy farm. Her grandparents, Daryl and Marie Pagel, farmed for years until her parents, Larry and Joyce Hummel, took over. The family were all faithful members at Washington Reformation UCC, serving on various committees, leading youth fellowship, and giving Julie and her brother, Steve, a strong faith foundation. Julie began playing piano at age 4, and when she was just shy of her 16th birthday, she began playing for worship services and choir twice a month. Julie attended UW-LaCrosse and then returned to Monticello to raise her two sons, Ryan and David.

Julie completed Lay Academy in 2018 and has been accepted as a Member in Discernment on an alternate path toward ordination. She is currently taking classes through the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary to supplement the education she received in Lay Academy. Julie's favorite hobbies are quilting and reading. Julie and her husband, Earnie, share a passion for music. Earnie has many years' experience in lawn care and pest control and is an avid outdoorsman, especially fishing. Julie and Earnie have been enjoying life as empty-nesters and new grandparents. Ryan and his wife, Krysta, live in Hazel Green, WI, with their 2-year-old son, Parker. Ryan is a large-animal veterinarian and co-owner of Hazel Green Veterinary Associates, and Krysta is a vet tech for the practice. David and his partner, Allison, live in Madison, where he is in management at Glacier Landscape, and she is a lending officer for Summit Credit Union.

