

Federated Church

OF SYCAMORE

United Church of Christ + Unitarian Universalist Association



seeking:

what are you seeking?

**honest questions for a deeper
faith and a more authentic life**

LENT 2023

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

A warm WELCOME to those visiting or checking out Federated Church!

We're glad you're here! Are you looking for more information about who we are, what we do, or how to get involved? Would you like to meet with Pastor Eric or get connected to others? In the book rack on the back of the pew toward the center aisle, you will find a green or red "pew pad" with a yellow bookmark-sized "Connection Card" inside. Fill it out and place it in the offering plate as they are passed around during the "Offertory," and we will be in touch with you soon!

Federated Church is an Open & Affirming Community

In a time of deep division and vitriolic rhetoric around issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, and where the dignity of people living with disabilities or mental health issues are often ignored, demonized, or turned into a joke, we promise to:

Welcome all people of every age, gender, race, national origin, faith expression, marital status & family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, physical ability, mental or emotional condition, economic and social status, and educational background to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our church family.

The Rainbow Flag: We proudly display a rainbow flag at the front of our sanctuary as a visual declaration of God's extravagant and inclusive love, as well as of our own "promise of welcome" to all people. Our prayer is that all can be their truest selves here. This flag serves as a particular signal that our church is a safe and affirming space for LGBTQ persons to be, to belong, to lead, to question, and to grow in faith.

Order of Worship | February 26, 2023

All music can be found at the back of the bulletin.

We invite you to say “Hi” in the comments and like the video to let us know you’re here.

*Please join in reading those parts printed in **bold***

Prelude

Gathering For Worship

Welcome

Passing the Peace

Gathering Song “We Seek You With Our Questions, God” (p. 3)

Centering Our Hearts

Sharing Prayers of Joy & for Healing

Silent Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art 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.

Choir Anthem

“Slow Down”

Edwin T Childs

Scripture

[Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11](#)

Sermon

“What Are You Seeking & Who Will You Listen To?”

Sung Response

“As the Moon” (p. 4)

Responding to God’s Invitation: Prayer Stations

Lent is an invitation to journey through our questions & doubts, fears & longings, griefs & wounds—to journey through the wildernesses of life instead of trying to avoid them. This year, we’re imagining the wilderness as “The Land of the Seeking.” During this time, as the music plays, we invite you to freely visit different prayer stations. Take your time. This works best if you don’t try to visit all the prayer stations each week; linger where your heart feels called and receive what you need as you journey toward new life.

Waiting in the Wilderness: The wilderness can be a season of silence; of waiting; a time when our most pressing questions have no simple or straightforward answers. Allow yourself to remain in your pew and sit in silence as you wait on God.

Wall of the Seeking: What is it your heart seeks? What questions do you carry? Write them down and add them to our Wall of Seeking. Pause to notice what others are seeking; offer a prayer for your fellow sojourners and receive theirs for you.

Water of Release: What is weighing you down? What do you need to release in order to journey toward new life? Take a slow, deep breath as you drop a stone—or stones—into the bowl of water as you release this burden.

Table of Offering: What is it you have to offer for the healing of the world God so loves? Place your donation to the church, to our Raise the Roof fund, or to our Love Offering supporting a community partner in the basket.

Baptismal Blessing: Dip your fingers in the baptismal font and mark your forehead in the sign of the cross or circle as a reminder of God's infinite and irrevocable love for you as you are, and your desire for this love to heal and keep making you new.

Prayer Candles: Light a candle and offer a prayer for a loved one or for a place / people around the world who are suffering.

Wonder Wall: Each card has a different question; take one (or a few) for the week ahead. Take a moment in the morning, over coffee, at dinner, or at bedtime to reflect on this question with a family member or friend and share a prayer together.

Preparing to Live God's Love

Our Shared Life

Sending Song "Who Will You Listen To?" (p.5)

Benediction

Postlude

As the postlude plays, please join us in Dutton Hall for coffee and fellowship!

† † †

“We Seek You with Our Questions, God”

Hannah C. Brown

Verse 1

We seek you with our questions, God, with open heart and mind;
we long to live a fresher life and leave our past behind,
for all that we have known before has faded and grown worn.
We seek you with our questions, God, that we might be reborn.

Verse 2

We wonder why things come to pass and how to come alive.
Where do your living waters flow? How can dry bones revive?
Who are you, God, who meet us here with wisdom and with sign?
We seek you with our questions, God, we yearn for truth divine.

Verse 3

We search for you in garden green where once you gave us birth;
We search for you in desert parched and all throughout the earth.
With wonder, worry, doubt, and awe, we search through night and day.
We seek you with our questions, God, at home and far away.

Verse 4

You seek us with your questions, God, inviting us to dare
to know you and to love you more, to grow through act and prayer.
“Who will you trust and follow now? My truth is all around.”
You seek us with your questions, God, you seek and we are found.

"As the Moon"
by Christopher Grundy



As the moon pulls the o - cean so my
tide rocks the beach - es lift - ing
sand shapes the shore-line sculpt-ing



soul is drawn to you. Pull me clo - ser as you
sand as it rolls through, lift us up in - to your
all the lands a - new, we will shape the world you're



cir - cle; I will fall and rise with you and rise with you
danc-ing. We will rise and dance with you and dance with you
dreaming, danc-ing with the ris - ing moon the ris - ing moon

"Who Will You Listen To?"

by Anna Strickland

The voi - ces from the past That ech - o through our
So ci - e - ty de - mands We al - ways strive for
A rush - ing flood of hate In news we of - ten
minds Like noi - sy ghosts haunt and har - ass With words un -
more Ac - cum - u - lat - ing wealth and land And leave the
see Con - ceals God's king - dom in a great Ca co - pho -
- kind Who will we lis - ten to? Lies that bind and a - base? Or
poor Who will we lis - ten to? The temp ter's jea - lou - sy? Or
- ny Who will we lis - ten to? The cha - os all a - round? Or
God who coun - ters words un - true With words of grace?
God's pro - vis - ion and pur - suit Of e - qui - ty?
God's dream of a world made new Where love a - bounds?

WORSHIP NOTES

Those serving us this morning are:

Pastor: Rev. Eric J. Ogi | **Ministers:** All of us! | **Director of Music:** Gary Mattin
Liturgist: Sheldon Turner | **Ushers:** : *Paula von Ende, and Skip & Bev Schramer*
Ushers for Sunday, Mar. 5: Dave Wood, Pam Wagener, and Chris Borresen

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Raise the Roof Campaign—After years of patchwork, a couple years ago we had to replace two major sections of our flat roof—the first time since the roof's construction when the church was built in the 1960s. The time has come for us to finish this work and complete the third and final section. **The cost of this final phase is just under \$100,000.** But, we still have \$67,000 left over from fundraising during the first two phases! **This means that all we have left to raise is \$30,000.**

Our goal is to raise this \$30,000 by May 1. As stewards entrusted with this gift that was handed down to us by our faithful forebears, please consider what you can offer to help us keep a roof over our heads, and so that we too can bless another generation.

Donations can be mailed in (612 W. State St.) or placed in the basket on the “Table of Offering” during Lent. For checks, please specify “roof fund” on the memo. We hope to have an online giving option available on our website soon!

Reach out to Church Treasurer, [Karen Hamingson](#), or Assistant Treasurer, [Dave Wood](#), by May 1 with any questions.

February’s Love Offering is for *CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)*. This donation will help to make it possible for *CASA* to advocate for children in our community whose parents are in the court system. *Learn more about CASA by scanning the QR Code:*



Cash or check donations may be placed in the Sunday “offering” plate. Make checks out to Federated Church and write “CASA” in the memo section; for cash donations use an envelope by the bulletins labeled *CASA*. Checks may also be mailed to The Federated Church, 612 W. State St., Sycamore, IL, 60178.

Listen to Sermons Online—Video of sermons are posted each week on our website: www.fedsycamore.org/sermons_. They're also available via podcast (*scan the QR code!*)



Progressive Christian Children's Books—we're curating a library of children's books that reflect our progressive Christian values of love, diversity, compassion, dignity, and justice for ALL. *Scan the QR code to see!*



From pictures to storylines, these books reflect an attention to diversity of authorship and representation in ethnicity, culture, race, gender, sexuality, and family units. They are LGBTQIA+ affirming, communicate healthy responses to feelings, and include an emphasis on our connection to and care for creation / the environment. These books are primarily written from a Christian perspective, although there are also many fantastic books that align with our values that are not explicitly "Christian." *Many of these titles are also available to be checked out for free from our church library! Have a question about how to do so? Email the church office!*

Lent 2023 Small Groups (*see next page for details*)

We are excited to share the following small group opportunities during the upcoming season of Lent. We like to think of these small group opportunities as mini "schools for life"—spaces where we pause from "doing" and to reflect on the kind of people we really want to *be*, the kind of life we really want to lead; when we start here, we may well realize that in order to get "there" we have to start doing things differently. These groups are meant to help us reflect on these kinds of questions. We hope that you'll consider how you might make room in your schedule to join us!

Have questions? Reach out to Pastor Eric!

Liberating Masculinity

Mondays in March (6, 13, 20, 27)

5:30-6:45pm

Location: Sheldon Turner & Nicole LaDue home

Join us for a *four-week* small group as we go beyond the traditional “men’s group” in order to explore ways that the box of “masculinity” has imprisoned and even dehumanized us. As we deconstruct toxic forms of masculinity, we will reflect on how these show up in our own lives, and reimagine together what it might look like to inhabit a masculinity that is liberating—or, even more, what liberating our humanity so we can live beyond the narrow masculine / feminine binary might look like.

This group welcomes trans men as well as those who are non-binary or gender non-conforming.

Book Discussion

This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us
by Cole Arthur Riley

Date and Time TBD

Sign up so we know how many people are interested

This Lent, the book that will center and guide our spiritual exploration is the stunning New York Times bestselling book, *This Here Flesh*, by Cole Riley.

This Here Flesh is a captivating spiritual meditation where ‘Black words live in dignity, lament, rage, and hope.’ It explores how spirituality can heal the body, heal the stories we inherit, and give language to the deepest experiences of being human. By attending to the particularity of her Black female body, and the stories of her ancestors, Riley creates a sacred space for the reader to attend to their own body, the stories of their own ancestors, and the liberation that already is and is to come if only we are brave enough to hear its sound.

Purchase your own copy and join us over 4-5 weeks in Lent as we read this book and reflect together on how God is inviting us to grow and be changed as we do.



*scan this QR code with your phone
camera to see the book on Amazon*

“This is the kind of book that makes you different when you’re done.”

– Ashley C. Ford, New York Times bestselling author of *Somebody’s Daughter*.

OUR FEDERATED VALUES

We believe in God

At the center of our faith is the surprising, unsettling, and deeply personal God found in the Bible, most profoundly revealed in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. At Federated, our primary interest is not merely talking *about* God, but in *encountering* the Mysterious Force at the heart of the universe. This is a God who comforts us where we need to be comforted and challenges us where we've become complacent. This is a God who will not be confined to dogmatic teachings, nor even to the Bible. We believe that we are invited to encounter this God everywhere: in nature, science, one another, and in other religious traditions as well.

Each person is on a unique spiritual journey

We value faith as a journey rather than a destination. We recognize that each person is at a different place on their journey, so we focus on “testimonies” of faith rather than “tests” of faith; stories of how we are being transformed, rather than dogmas we must affirm. Here, you are welcome to belong, question, explore, and lead whether you grew up in church and loved it, or you've had a painful relationship with Christianity; you are welcome whether you feel your faith is unshakeable or you're not sure if you believe in God at all. You are welcome to join a community of people "on the way": encouraging and caring for one another, learning and growing together, and serving alongside each other as we build, in some small way, the world we believe God dreams of.

Building authentic community across our differences

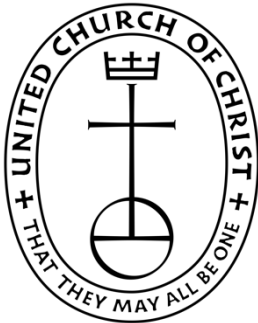
We are an "Open and Affirming" congregation, which is our way of saying that we value diversity. In a time of deep division, we believe it is paramount to gather people from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and identities in order to build authentic relationships and community. We believe that the simple but courageous work of showing up and being together in this way is one necessary element in healing our nation and world's deep divisions.

We believe in peace through justice

In this congregation, conversations regarding racism, sexism, poverty, war, immigration, homophobia, hunger, abuse, and a host of other issues are commonplace, both from the pulpit and around the table. We know that the Realm of God is not being experienced on earth so long as people are being hurt. With Martin Luther King Jr., we believe that we are all "caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny," and that "none of us can be free until all are free." Which means that, as a community, we have a God-given responsibility and mission to work for justice and healing in our neighborhood and beyond. Jesus says: "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). This work is defined not merely by what we are against, but the vision we are for—flourishing for *all!*

“Welcoming Any, Loving All”

*The Federated Church is affiliated with two national denominations:
the United Church of Christ & the Unitarian Universalist Association*



Follow us on

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