

THE  
**Federated Church**  
OF SYCAMORE



everything  
[in] between

Meeting God in the midst of extremes

Lent 2025

# Responding to God's Invitation

## Prayer Stations at home for online worshippers

*Lent is an invitation to journey through the things we tend to avoid—our doubts, fears, griefs, wounds, and even death. This Lent, though, we are inviting you to hold the “both/and” of life—for even amidst our doubts, we do believe in something; in the face of fear, we experience courage; our wounds can make way for connection; and even death can be the seedbed for new life. Let's meet God here, in the midst of life's polarities.*

*During this time (~10 min), people in the sanctuary will be visiting various prayer stations. While we can't re-create that experience for you at home, here are some ways you can use this time to create sacred space and connection for yourself wherever you are!*

**Waiting in the Wilderness:** Some seasons of life feel like wilderness wandering. Even here, God is present. We, too, are invited to be present—even here.

*Meditate on the poem(s) (p. 6 & 7 in the bulletin). This will be a new poem each week. As you read, notice what word jumps out at you; what feeling(s) arise(s) in you.*

*When you finish, take a few slow deep breaths and read the poem again. This time, listen for how these words are calling you to action. Reflect on the prompt beneath the poem.*

**Divine Seeing:** *Pause to look more deeply at the artwork (on p. 8) inspired by today's scripture. As you do, ponder the questions and Artist's Statement (p. 9) beneath it.*

**Prayer Candles:** Lighting candles as one prays for a loved one or a people / place around the world who are weary, war-torn, grieving, or suffering is an ancient spiritual practice. *Find a candle, bring it into your space with you and, as you light it, offer any prayers for yourself, loved ones, or people around the world.*

**Table of Offering:** We are grateful to continue expanding our accessibility online, growing our intergenerational community in person, and offering a bold witness of love and justice in the wider world. As a small church/nonprofit, none of this is possible without many donations, large and small. Your donations to the “general fund” will especially help us enhance our growing children's ministries and accessibility for young families. *If our worship or ministries have blessed you, we invite you to consider making a donation to support them or our Love Offering partner through [this link](#).*

**Practices for Living in the Messy Middle:** In Lent, we intentionally focus on practices that help us live more fully amidst the mess, brokenness, and uncertainty, trusting that as we do, healing, hope, and new life *will* emerge—even here. [Click here](#) for an e-reader version of our Lenten devotional filled with poetry, art, question prompts, and short essay reflections. Commit to using this devotional as a spiritual practice during Lent. Use the question prompts to deepen conversation with a partner, friend, or (grand)child!

## Order of Worship | April 06, 2025 | 10:00 am

Today we will be taking communion. We invite you to participate however you're best able. Feel free to use whatever you have for the "bread and cup"—whether it's bread & grape juice or a cookie & coffee. God takes our ordinary offerings, whatever they are, and blesses them as we share them together!  
All music can be found at the back of the bulletin.

**Prelude** "Here I Am, Lord" Daniel Schutte / arr. M. Kim

### Gathering For Worship

#### Welcome

**Passing the Peace** We invite you to like the video and/or say "Hi!" in the comments to let us know you're here.

**Gathering Song** "Walls Mark Our Bound'ries" (p.3)

### Centering Our Hearts

#### Prayers of the People

#### Silent Prayer & The Lord's Prayer

Our Father/Mother/Parent who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.  
Your kin(g)dom come, your 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

**Song of Illumination** "What Does the Lord Require of You?" (p.2)

**Scripture** [Luke 19:1-10](#)

**Sermon** "Righteousness AND Mercy"

**Sung Response** "What Does the Lord Require of You?" (p.2)

**Prayer Stations: Responding to God's Invitation** (see inside bulletin cover)

### Preparing to Live God's Love

#### Our Shared Life

**Sending Song** "Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly" (p.4)

#### Benediction

**Postlude** "Hymn of Promise" Natalie Sleeth / arr. M.A. Kim  
Thank you for joining us for worship today!

# WORSHIP NOTES

*Serving us this morning are:*

**Pastor:** Rev. Eric J. Ogi | **Ministers:** All of us! | **Music Director:** Gary Mattin  
**Children's Church Director:** Bill O'Hagan | **Childcare Support:** Janis Schnurr-Trebe  
**Liturgist:** Sheldon Turner | **Ushers:** Pam Wagener, Chris Borresen, and Skip Schramer  
*Ushers for Sunday, April 13: Gip Seaver, Ruth Olle, and Skip Schramer*

All hymns this morning are used with permission: *CCLI License #3234671*

## "What Does the Lord Require of You?" by Jim Strathdee

\*1.  
What does the Lord re - quire of you?

2.  
Jus - tice, kind - ness,


3.  
To seek jus - tice and love kind - ness

(C) (G) (Am) (D) (G)  
Eb Bb Cm F Bb


*Repeat as desired*

What does the Lord re - quire of you?  
walk hum - bly with your God.  
and walk hum - bly with your God.

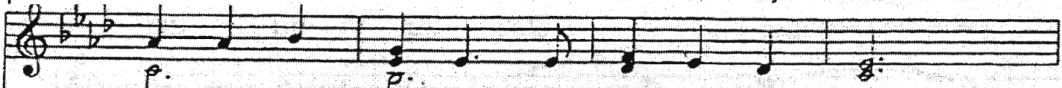
"Walls Mark Our Bound'ries" by Ruth Duck




1 Walls mark our bound'-ries and keep us a - part;  
 2 Walls make us sure who is in and who's out;  
 3 Once we were strang-ers. di - vi - ded, a - lone.



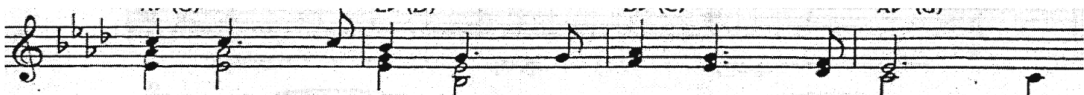
walls keep the world from our eyes and our heart.  
 walls keep us safe from all ques - tion and doubt,  
 Hate and dis - trust built a wall stone by stone.



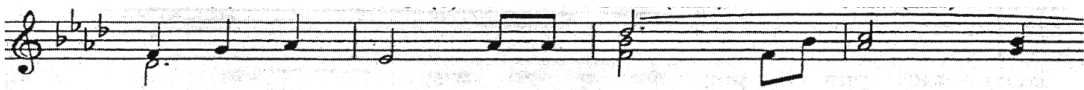
Ta - bles are round, mak - ing room for one more,  
 but at a ta - ble in o - pen ex - change  
 Now at a ta - ble the bread that we share



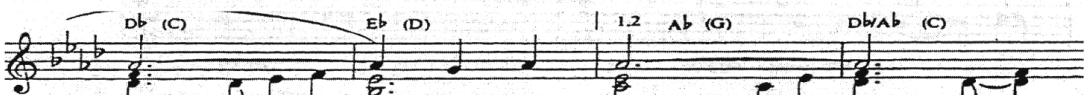
wel - com - ing friends we had not known be - fore. So  
 new ties are formed as our lives re - ar - range. So  
 joins us to Christ in a cir - cle of care. So



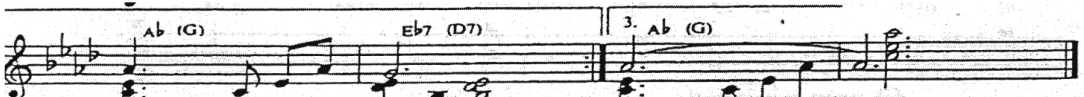
build us a ta - ble and tear down the wall!



Christ is our host. There is room



for us all!



all!



**“Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly” by Pat Barrett**

*Pno.* 1. It

5 all comes down to this, what You re - quire of me. Love my

9 neigh - bor as my - self, and You a - bove all things. Act

*refrain*

13 just - ly, love mer - cy, walk humb - ly with You, God. In

17 all things, in all ways, walk humb - ly with You, God. 2. It

*Last time to bridge*

21 all comes down to this, to be Your hands and feet. Good

25 news to all the world, oh the truth will set us free. Act

*to refrain*

29 You, God. *bridge* It's beau - ty for ash - es, it's mourn - ing to danc - ing. It's

32 clos - er and clos - er, the King - dom of heav - en. Beau - ty for ash - es, it's

35 mourn - ing to danc - ing. It's clos - er and clos - er, the King - dom of heav - en.

(Continued next page)

38 (W.L.)

42 3. Years from now we'll see, the fruit our hands have sown.

46 Faith just like a seed, the on - ly way it grows.

54 Act just - ly, love mer - cy, walk humb - ly with You, God. In

58 all things, in all ways, walk humb - ly with You, God.



# everything [in] between

Meeting God in the midst of extremes

## **Waiting in the Wilderness**

### **“Righteous & Mercy”**

As children we were taught to tell the teacher.

(Justice was dealt when we spoke up.)

As children we were taught to always be kind.

(Friends were made when we spoke love.)

As children we were taught that Zaccheus  
climbed a tree.

(But we cut that tree down a long time ago.)

So what are the rules for this day and age?

Can we turn black and white into shades of gray?

Do we call each other out, for righteousness  
sake?

Do we call each other in? Do we grab something  
to eat?

As always, love is somewhere in between.

*by Rev. Sarah Speed*



## “Call Me In”

You could call me out.

You could hang me out to dry.

You could list my sins.

You could shrink me down to size.

Or, you could call me in.

You could grab my hand.

You could show me what I missed.

## Where am I on the spectrum?

As you ponder this week’s polarities—*righteous & mercy*—consider where you would place yourself. Do you feel more strongly aligned to one end or the other, or more in the middle?

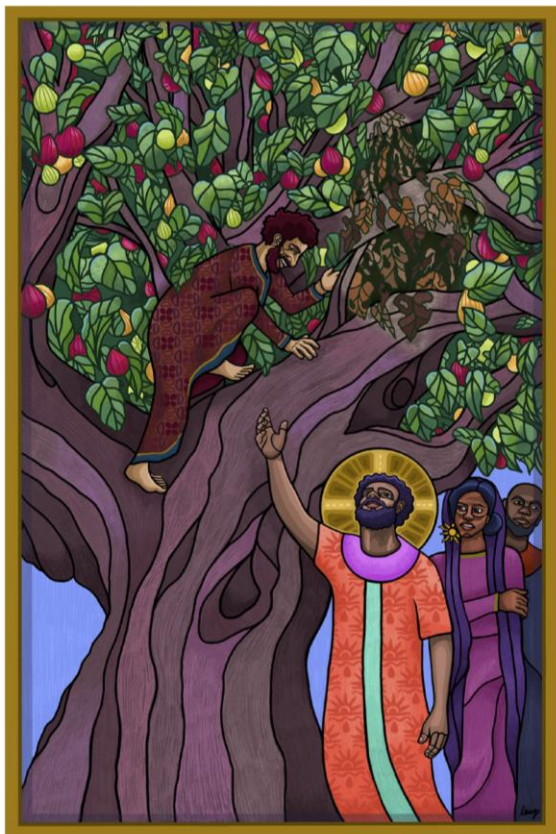
Consider how your location on the spectrum reflects where you are in your faith journey. Is your current location different from previous seasons of life? Is God calling you to move in a particular direction now?

Take this insert home with you and offer a prayer asking God to grant you what you need as you journey ahead.

righteous-----mercy







## Zacchaeus

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Luke 19:1-10

*Digital painting*

I had a lot of fun discovering new layers to this familiar story. I learned that Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore fig tree, which was a food source for poor people because the fruit was bitter and generally undesirable.<sup>9</sup> I had always imagined a fruitless tree, but the presence of fruit opened up interesting avenues to explore. The root word for sycamore tree is σῦκον, meaning “fig,” and as I did a study of other key words in the text, I noticed this same root word in συκοφαντεω, or “defrauded,” which was used to describe what Zacchaeus did to his community. It was curious to me that the root word for “defrauded” was “fig,” so I dug deeper to find that the Greek word was from the phrase “fig-informer” or a person who would notify authorities if one was exporting figs from Greece without paying a tax. It seemed that these “fig-informers” would use the threat of exposure to extort money from fig farmers. This is where the word “sycophant”

comes from, which evolved to more generally describe a “malignant accuser from love of gain,” which perfectly describes Zacchaeus.<sup>10</sup>

Jesus calls Zacchaeus out of his identity as “sycophant” into his new identity as “repentant host” who invites Jesus into his home and redistributes his ill-gotten wealth. Zacchaeus’s clothing holds a repeated pattern of four figs and halves of coins, referencing the fruits of his transformation.

The area where Zacchaeus sat in the tree is fruitless and dying. His actions were destructive and oppressive to his own community. The crowd is correct in grumbling about him; their anger is righteous, but Jesus offers mercy. In this visual metaphor, Jesus removes him from the tree so it has a chance to heal and nourish the whole community. Jesus’ clothing is patterned with suns, representing righteousness, and water, representing mercy, because it is through his merciful actions that righteousness for the community is achieved.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

† † †

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Annual Calendaring Session** | *TODAY, following worship*

Join the Leadership Board at this informal gathering where we will select dates (and point people) for the important events through January 2026.

### **Maundy Thursday Dinner & Service** | *Thursday, April 17, 5:30-7:30 PM*

Join us for our intergenerational Maundy Thursday service, beginning with dinner at 5:30pm in Dutton Hall. When the adults move into the sanctuary, children will go to the Chapel with Mr. Bill to engage by grace the rest of the story in a developmentally appropriate way. RSVP online or in Dutton Hall by April 13.

### **Easter Flower Orders**

Daffodils and tulips are still available to order for Easter Sunday. Today is your last chance to reserve yours on the sheet in Dutton Hall.

### **Easter Sunday Worship** | *Sunday, April 20, 10 AM*

Join us for a special Easter Sunday service. More information to come.

### **April Love Offering** | *One Great Hour of Sharing*

Since this is such an important Love Offering, the donation period is being extended through April! This mission engages UCC congregations in disaster relief, refugee resettlement, and development initiatives around the world.

Special offering envelopes and an informational flyer can be found at the **Table of Offering Prayer Station**. Please indicate OGHS if giving by check.

### **Common Table DeKalb** | *Friday, April 25, time TBD*

Save the date! Common Table DeKalb is a county-wide initiative that Federated helped launch this year. We will be hosting a gathering the evening of Friday, April 25. More details to come (including required registration).

Common Table is a year-long initiative that seeks to bring together diverse cross-sections of our community to eat together (over a FREE meal) and share stories about our lives, struggles, and resilience. The goal is that, as we deepen our connections, partnerships will form, and we will be more able to show up for each other.

### **Weekly eNews**

Scan this QR code with your phone camera to see the most recent eNews with all these announcements and more! Subscribe tab is at the top.



# 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.

## **We believe 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.

## **We believe in 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 working for 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*



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**[www.fedsycamore.org](http://www.fedsycamore.org)**

**Church Office Phone:** (815) 895-2706 || **Email:** [Office@fedsycamore.org](mailto:Office@fedsycamore.org)

**Pastor Eric Cell:** (815) 797-2250 || **Email** [RevEric@fedsycamore.org](mailto:RevEric@fedsycamore.org)

**Director of Children’s Church:** Bill O’Hagan

**Childcare Support:** Janis Schnurr-Trebe

**Federated Church Preschool, Director Bobbi Clough**

**Phone:** (815) 764-9473 || **Email:** [Preschool@fedsycamore.org](mailto:Preschool@fedsycamore.org)

**Address:** 612 W. State Street, Sycamore, IL 60178