

**First Sunday in Lent**  
**February 22, 2026**  
United Church of Christ - Neillsville  
Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

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**PRELUDE** Holly Pisors

**RINGING OF THE CARILLON**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**PREPARING OUR HEARTS TO HEAR THE WORD**

**HYMN:** "Gathered Here" Phil Porter

**#742 NCH (sing twice)**

Gathered here in the mystery of this hour,  
Gathered here in one strong body,  
Gathered here in the struggle and the pow'r,  
Spirit, draw near.

**MEDITATION MOMENT**

**RESPONSE:** "Come and Fill Our Hearts"

**#16 MV (sing twice)**

Come and fill our hearts with your peace.  
You alone, O God are holy.  
Come and fill our hearts with your peace,  
A- - - men.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Turn away from the calls of worldly success

**Repent, and turn back to God.**

Turn away from the desire to have what everyone  
else has

**Repent, and turn back to God.**

Turn away from greed and the race for power

**Repent, and turn back to God.**

As we enter Lent, may we turn back to God

**May we seek forgiveness,**

**may we seek healing,**

**may we seek wholeness.**

**May our hearts be renewed in this time of worship.**

**OPENING PRAYER**

Holy One, we are constantly bombarded with  
temptations and enticements. When we yield,  
when we fail, who will help us? You, Lord, have  
come to our aid. You teach us, counsel us, and  
guide us in the ways we should go. We rejoice in  
your unfailing love. Amen.

**HYMN** "Lord Jesus, Who Through Forty Days"

**#211 NCH** Claudia F.I. Hernaman

**1 Lord Jesus, who through forty days  
for us did fast and pray,  
teach us with you to mourn our sins,  
and at your side to stay.**

**2 As you with Satan did contend,  
and did the vict'ry win,  
oh give us strength to persevere,  
in you to conquer sin.**

**3 And through these days of penitence,  
and through this Passiontide,  
yes, evermore, in life and death,  
O Christ, with us abide.**

**4 Abide with us, till when this life  
of suffering shall be past,  
an Easter of unending joy  
we may attain at last.**

**PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION**

Gracious and merciful God, we confess to you our  
reluctance to enter the wilderness places where we  
are confronted with our true selves. The places  
where we are tempted to put worldly values before  
our desire for you, and when our hunger for power  
and wealth is greater than our hunger for seeking and  
doing your will:

**Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.**

When we are tempted to use the gifts you give us to  
benefit ourselves at the expense of serving others:

**Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.**

When we are tempted to use sensational means to  
increase people's faith, rather than being guided by  
the humility of Christ:

**Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.**

When we are tempted to use bribery to influence and  
control people:

**Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.**

When we are tempted to manipulate you, O God, to satisfy our own needs:

**Forgive us, O God, and increase our trust in you.**

*A time of silence for personal confession*

Merciful God, save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. Forgive us our sins and fill us with the joy and peace of your salvation. So strengthen us with your Spirit during this Lenten season that we put our whole trust in you as confidently as Jesus did.

**This we pray in his name. Amen**

### WORDS OF GRACE

**RESPONSE:** *“Hold Us in Your Grace, O God”*

Lyrics: Keri K. Wehlander

Music: Bruce Harding and Keri K. Wehlander

**Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.**

**Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.**

**Hold us, hold us in your grace.**

**Hold us, hold us in your grace.**

### PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: The Peace of God be with you.

**Many: And also with you.**

**RESPONSE:** *“Hold Us in Your Grace, O God”*

Lyrics: Keri K. Wehlander

Music: Bruce Harding and Keri K. Wehlander

**Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.**

**Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.**

**Hold us, hold us in your grace.**

**Hold us, hold us in your grace.**

### HEARING THE WORD

#### CHILDREN’S TIME

Barb Shoemaker

#### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Susie Karl

##### OLD TESTAMENT    **Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7**

<sup>15</sup> The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. <sup>16</sup> But the Lord God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— <sup>17</sup> except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

<sup>3:1</sup> The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked

the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

<sup>2</sup> “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. <sup>3</sup> “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup> “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman.

<sup>5</sup> “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup> The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. <sup>7</sup> At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

#### **Epistle: Romans 5:12-19**

<sup>12</sup> When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. <sup>13</sup> Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. <sup>14</sup> Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. <sup>15</sup> But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. <sup>16</sup> And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. <sup>17</sup> For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup> Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. <sup>19</sup> Because one person disobeyed God,

many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

**Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11 *The Temptation of Christ***

<sup>4:1</sup> Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. <sup>2</sup> For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

<sup>3</sup> During that time the devil came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.”

<sup>4</sup> But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, <sup>6</sup> and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the Lord your God.’”

<sup>8</sup> Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> “I will give it all to you,” he said, “if you will kneel down and worship me.”

<sup>10</sup> “Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’”

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

**SERMON** “Pride, Power and Possessions” Pastor Julie

**HYMN** “*When We Are Tested*” Words: Ruth Duck  
Tune: SLANE (“*Be Thou My Vision*”)

**1 When we are tested and wrestle alone,  
famished for bread when the world offers stone,  
nourish us, God, by your word and your way,  
food that sustains us by night and by day.**

**2 When in the desert we cry for relief,  
pleading for paths marked by certain belief,  
lift us to love you beyond sign and test,  
trusting your presence, our only true rest.**

**3 When we are tempted to barter our souls,  
trading the truth for the power to control,  
teach us to worship and praise only you,  
seeking your will in the work that we do.**

**4 When we have struggled and searched through  
the night,  
sorting and sifting the wrong from the right,  
Savior, surround us with circles of care,  
angels of healing, of hope, and of prayer.**

**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**

**RESPONDING TO THE WORD**

**THE OFFERING SERVICE**

**Invitation to Generosity**

**Offertory**

**Doxology**

**Praise God throughout these forty days;  
Praise Christ, our Lord, whom God did raise;  
And praise the Spirit who imparts  
God’s love in Christ into our hearts. Amen.**

**Prayer of Dedication**

**God of the wilderness, We give these offerings in gratitude, rejoicing in the abundance of your gifts to us. We give these offerings in faith, trusting that you will provide for our needs. We give these offerings in hope, knowing you can use them to spread your love in this world. And with these offerings, we give ourselves; May we live with generous hearts, with open hands. Amen**

**HYMN** “*Before Your Cross, O Jesus*”

**#191 NCH (vs 1-2)** Ferdinand Q. Blanchard

**1 Before your cross, O Jesus,  
our lives are judged today;  
the meaning of our eager strife  
is tested by your way.  
Across our restless living,  
the light streams from your cross,  
and by its clear, revealing beams  
we measure gain and loss.**

2 The hopes that lead us onward,  
the fears that hold us back,  
our will to dare great things for God,  
the courage that we lack,  
The faith we keep in goodness,  
our love, as low or pure,  
on all, the judgment of the cross  
falls steady, clear, and sure.

### BLESSING

### SHARING OUR BLESSINGS AND BURDENS

*As we are gathered together as children of God, we are called to share our blessings and joys and our concerns, our deepest fears, sadnesses, griefs and needs so that we may bear one another up and support each other in prayer and Christian love.*

**HYMN** "Before Your Cross, O Jesus"

**#191 NCH (vs 3)** Ferdinand Q. Blanchard

3 Yet humbly, in our striving,  
we rise to face its test.  
We crave the power to do your will  
as once you did it best.  
On us let now the healing  
of your great Spirit fall,  
and make us brave and full of joy  
to answer to your call.

### BENEDICTION

**POSTLUDE** Holly Pisors

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

This week's radio broadcast is sponsored  
anonymously by a "faithful listener".

## WELCOME

We welcome you to our service of worship!  
We are glad that you have joined us on site,  
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.

YouTube link for Sunday, February 22, 2026

<https://youtube.com/live/Riw2-cjq0AU>

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### This Sunday, February 22nd

#### **- 9:30 AM Worship**

Deacon – Wayne Voss

Greeters – Chad & Lacey, Kyson Erickson

Ushers – Marla & Joel Raine

Power Point – Brynn Heck

AV –Stephanie Heck

**FYI - (for those who are scheduled for PowerPoint/AV it is suggested that you arrive 30 minutes prior to the church service to get the laptop turned on, allow for any updates, get screen down and start running the announcements).**

### Following Sunday, March 1st

Deacon – Wayne Voss

Greeters – Chad & Lacey, Kyson Erickson

Ushers – Marla & Joel Raine

Power Point – Barb Petkovsek

AV –Emile Miller

### Tuesday, February 24th

**- 1:00 PM Bible Study**

### Wednesday, February 25th

**- 6:00 PM viewing of "The Chosen" at Calvary**

### **Coffee fellowship after worship -**

Sign up on back bulletin board

Feb 22 – Susie Karl

Mar 1 – Sharon Buddenhagen

Mar 8 – Rodman's

Mar 15 –

Mar 22 – Weyer & Hamm

We need people to sign up

## Volunteers Needed for Sunday Worship

February 22 – April 5, 2026

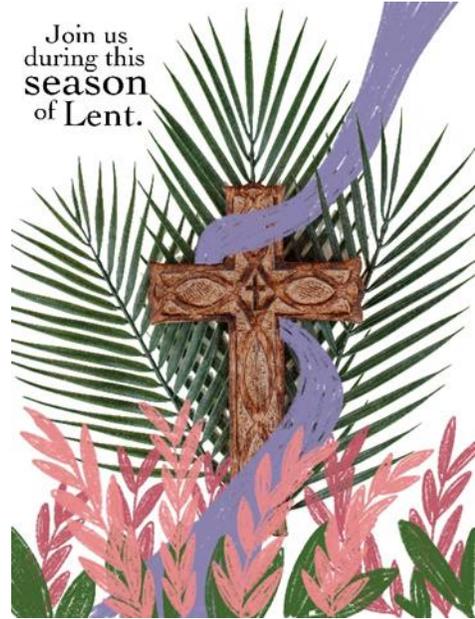
We are looking for volunteers to assist with Sunday worship by **reading the scriptures and/or leading the children's message**. Pastor Julie will choose the scripture readings, and volunteers will prepare and lead the children's message. Pastor Julie has online resources available and is happy to discuss ideas or offer guidance.

If you feel called to help, please add your name to the schedule below. For more specifics of questions please contact Sally Sadowska or Janice Miller.

Thank you for serving!

Sunday	Scripture	Children's message
Feb. 22	Susie Karl	Barb Shoemaker
Mar. 1	Wayne Voss	Bonnie Weyer
Mar. 8	Barb Shoemaker	
Mar. 15	Byrl Buddenhagen	Barb Shoemaker
Mar. 22	Nancy Rodman	Debbie Perkl
Mar 29 (Palm)		
April 5 (Easter)		

Join us  
during this  
season  
of Lent.



**Feb. 25 & Mar. 4 – at Calvary**  
6 PM viewing "The Chosen"

**Mar. 11 – at UCC**  
Chili Feast from 11–1 and 4-6 PM  
\$10 (\$5 – 12 and under, FREE – 3 and under)  
6:30 PM viewing "The Chosen"

**Mar. 18 & Mar. 25 – at Calvary**  
6 PM viewing "The Chosen"

**Apr. 2 – Maundy Thursday at UCC**  
6:30 PM - Worship & communion served