

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL  
Wallace, Idaho

Alice M.C. Ling, Pastor

November 14, 2021

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

PRELUDE “*Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*”

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Budget meeting after worship – the budget is attached to the PDF, as is an insert related to the theme  
Decorate the sanctuary after worship Nov. 28

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, let us give thanks to God!

**We gather together to praise the One who strengthens the weak, and hears the prayers of the forgotten.**

Come, let us give thanks to Christ!

**We gather together to sing of the One who calls us to serve those who are hungry and alone at this time of year.**

Come, let us give thanks to the Spirit!

**We gather together to exalt the One who provokes us to love not only our family and friends, but the guest among us.** (Thom M. Shuman, *Where the Broken Gather*)

HYMN No. 2 “*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*”

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above;  
Praise His name – I’m fixed upon it – Name of God’s redeeming love.

Hitherto Thy love has blest me; Thou hast brought me to this place;  
And I know Thy hand will bring me Safely home by Thy good grace.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wandering from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger, Bought me with His precious blood,

O to grace how great a debtor Daily I’m constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee:  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here’s my heart, O take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (in unison)

**Holy Spirit of God, who gathers the church into one body, gather us once again in your presence and strengthen the bonds of affection that hold your people together. Bless us with grace to cooperate with one another in love and service that we may be the signs of your uniting love to our fractured world. Teach us to show compassion for those in need, to face challenges with imagination, and to counter disappointments with prayerful trust. So may your church bring forth your will and your reign. Amen.** (Margaret Gay MacKinnon Godfrey, *Touch Holiness*)

SCRIPTURE READING Mark 13:1-8

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

## SERMON

True confessions: I was fortunate to have two Sundays out of the pulpit at the end of September, beginning of October. When I came back and pulled out the lectionary readings for the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, it took me seconds for a quick scan of the Gospel reading before I started groaning. Really? Is it that time again – already? You’ve got to be kidding me. What I’d seen was a verse in Mark 10, when Jesus sends an earnest seeker away in shock, having told him to go, sell all he owned and give the money to the poor. Given how much stuff most of us have, I don’t think of it as one of our favorites, likely to warm our hearts or give us joy. But what I was really reacting to was my experience of what happens every year right about now. The church year runs from the beginning of Advent to the end of Pentecost, and every year we read through one of the Gospels, sort of start to finish. By the time we get this late in the church year, we’re also nearing the end of the Gospel where Jesus is talking about suffering and death, and telling his disciples comforting things like sell all you have, give the money to the poor and come follow me; whoever doesn’t hate their mother and brothers and sisters, can’t be my follower; I haven’t come to bring peace but a sword; take up your cross and follow me; and other such sweet talk. Not my favorite part of the preaching cycle. Which is part of why I’ve moved around a bit in the past few weeks, talking about Jeremiah and Ruth in between some of the readings from Mark.

I say all of that as backdrop for this morning, which is when we arrive at the last reading from Mark for the year, only to hear Jesus warning his disciples that the grand and glorious temple, awe-inspiring fete of construction in the ancient world, will be destroyed, not one stone left upon another, all will be thrown down. And then he moves on to war and rumors of wars, nations will rise up against nation, kingdom against kingdom, there will be earthquakes and famines, and so on and so forth. Right. Like that’s what I want to talk about or you want to listen to. I was on the brink of making my escape and turning my attention elsewhere, when I decided, just for good measure, maybe I should listen to the weekly Sermon Brainwave podcast, and see if that panel of 4 teachers/preachers could help me find something I could work with. And what do I hear? Matt Skinner acknowledging that some preachers will avoid this reading from Mark (yup, not many sermons on this text in my file). And then he went on to say, We’ve never been better situated to interpret a text like this. We’ve just spent coming up on two years with churches trying to figure out how to interpret a pandemic. What does this mean for us? What does it mean to sit down and talk to your children about why you can’t go to school, why you have to wear a mask, why your grandparent has died suddenly? How are we interpreting a world that is so perilously close to slipping into chaos? What does it mean to live in a pandemic that’s been intensified, at least in the United States by racist realities, intensified by the political climate, intensified by certain aspects of the American ethos that make it difficult to love your neighbor? We are uniquely positioned this year to interpret this passage for the context in which it was written. The questions before us are the ones that were before the disciples just before and after Jesus died: where do we go now, and where is Jesus in the midst of all this? And so here we are. Welcome to Mark 13.

The chapter opens as Jesus and his followers are leaving the temple, and one of them stops to admire the grand and glorious structure that Herod had built to impress the wealthiest and most powerful rulers of his day. It was a great architectural achievement, a mountain of white marble adorned with gold, a temple dripping with wealth. To which Jesus said, you see these great buildings? It’s only a matter of

time until they're a pile of rubble; not one stone will be left on another, all will be thrown down. It's hard to know exactly where Jesus' prediction was coming from, but we can imagine it shook his listeners to their core. Surely God wouldn't let this happen to such a magnificent building, a place of holy contact! And yet, and yet... We know from painful experience that glorious buildings do come down. The Twin Towers and Notre Dame, to name just two. And truth be told, by the time Mark actually wrote this Gospel, the people were living in the midst of war. Scholars don't seem to be sure if the temple had come down when Mark wrote or if it did soon after, but either way, Mark is speaking to the horrifying reality of life-disorienting loss; the people weren't as shocked as they would have been in Jesus' last days, but every bit as heartbroken.

From there, Jesus and four of his disciples, the very first ones he called back in chapter 1, sat together on the Mount of Olives, and the disciples peppered Jesus with questions about details, the when and what and where belonging to the prediction he'd just made. Maybe life wouldn't feel as chaotic and out of control if they were better prepared for what was coming. To which Jesus added a bunch more predictions and warnings about what lay ahead, filling what we know as chapter 13. We only heard the very first part of Jesus' words, his longest speech in the Gospel of Mark. It's a chapter often referred to as apocalyptic literature, a form of biblical writing directed to a people in crisis, intended to warn and reassure them all at once. To return to Matt Skinner's words in the podcast, Jesus was speaking and Mark was writing it down in the midst of great confusion, great distress and great worry. People were frantic with questions like where is Jesus, when is he coming back, how are we supposed to live in the meantime. To which Mark says, keep your seatbelts fastened for the duration of the flight for your own safety. The life of discipleship is a lot like the road to the cross. Your job, dear disciples, is to continue to bear witness as Jesus told you back at the beginning.

Part of what I like most about this text is language in the very last sentence, when Jesus told the disciples that what they were about to experience was the beginning of birth pangs. I've never been in labor, but I know that many of you have. I hear it's pain unlike anything anyone else will ever experience – and women freely, often eagerly, choose to endure it for the sake of the new life that is waiting on the other side. What I hear in Jesus' choice of that image is both the promise and the reassurance that the pain of this confusion and chaos is leading somewhere; it's not all about pain and destruction, but about a new life in the process of being born. Apocalyptic literature urges us to believe that promise, and to trust and hold on; stay awake and alert for the signs and signals. And in the meantime, keep doing what you've been told to do from the start. Share the Good News. Tell the people that God has come close. And love, love both God and your neighbor with everything you have in you.

I've never aspired to live in a time that helped me comprehend apocalyptic literature; honestly, I'd rather ignore apocalyptic literature. But now that we're here, I think this writing helps me to make sense of our experience. And helps orient me to the work that lies ahead of us. We're surrounded by chaos and confusion, and some days I'm not sure if Covid or the other quagmires of this moment seem more distressing. Concerts are taking place again, but then they turn deadly. Vaccines are available for children, but 25 states and Europe are seeing COVID numbers on the increase yet again. We talk a lot about the nastiness of national politics, and then the local mayor's race was filled with attacks and accusations. And so on and so forth. We all know I could go on forever.

What difference might it make if we approach this time of chaos as birthpangs, as holding the possibility – and in God's hands, the certainty – as leading to new life? Of something we've never seen, maybe never even imagined? To look and live in that way means letting go of what used to be, or trying to force things back to some long-lost form of normal that we feel nostalgic for. Jesus would tell us not to waste our time asking when the new is going to arrive on the scene and set up shop. Instead focus on the work we've been given from the start: feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, visit the sick, care for

the weak. Love God and love our neighbors – all of our neighbors. I think of the woman I saw in a news story out of the concert disaster in Houston last weekend, a woman who was squeezed and stuck; on the edge of being trampled, she feared for her life. And when she could finally move again, she went to work, helping the injured around her. A recent graduate of nurse's training, she put it to work, helping the people around her in need of help. And then there's the group of men who responded after 23 students were arrested for a rash of fights in a Louisiana high school. They organized themselves as "Dad's on Duty" and now they roam the halls of that school, banter with students, encourage them to get to class, and give them "the look" that father's are known for, saying don't mess with me without saying a word. And so far, the fighting has stopped.

Apocalyptic literature speaks directly to us in the midst of the chaos and confusion of a pandemic that just won't quit, political bickering and racial profiling, extreme weather and climate craziness, and an overall ethos that taunts us not to let down our guard or even think of loving that neighbor. It tells us to keep our seatbelts fastened for the duration of the flight for our own safety. And to keep our eyes and our hearts wide open for sightings of Jesus and glimpses of the presence of God. Look for signs of new life and watch for the dawning of God's new day. And while we're waiting, go ahead and love your neighbor.

HYMN No. 202 *"Amazing Grace"*

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed.

The Lord has promised good to me, God's word my hope secures;  
God will my shield and portion be As long as life endures.

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.

#### PRAYER REQUESTS

- For the family and friends of Ron Merrick, who died this week of Covid. Especially Joe, Katie, Violet and Josie Bauer (Shoshone Funeral Home has seen 27 Covid deaths in the last 2 months)
- Dorothy Thielman, as she adjusts to life at Autumn Haven Assisted Living, and for the support of family as they try to be with her (I have an address for any who would like it)
- Family and friends of Monica Lewis (daughter Haley is friend of Christi's), died Saturday after a 3 year battle with lung cancer, started out as ovarian cancer...

#### PASTORAL PRAYER

Holy God, you are the giver of all life, the fountain of all hope, the source of all love, and we give you thanks. For moments of beauty that take our breath away and simple acts of kindness that bring a smile to our faces; for rays of sunlight that disturb the gray of November rains and the steady companionship of a loved one who walks beside us day after day; for the warmth of our homes, the food on our tables and the people who accept us as we are; for the gift of healing, the possibility of a fresh start and the miracle of new life; for the promise that you are always with us, that your light invades every darkness and that you will always have the last word and that word will be love. Thank you for coming among us, walking beside us, gifting us with possibility and leading us in love.

Beloved God, you know better than we do that all is not well with our world, and so we bring to you the concerns and burdens of our hearts: for those who are sick, adjusting to a new home, grieving the loss of a loved one; for those who look for work and employers who look for workers; for the homeless who search for places of shelter and belonging; for veterans who continue to carry the trauma of war

and all those who carry the hidden wounds of abuse; for those who battle addictions and families that don't know how to help; for a health care system and its workers, overwhelmed and burned out from the relentless demands and changing terms of Covid; for scientists who work tirelessly for answers and insights, and a public that wrestles and chafes, cooperates and assists. Come among us yet again, wrapping us in your healing, grounding us in your wisdom, filling us with your courage and leading us with your love.

We pray, holy God, for all that divides us, and prevents us from recognizing your image in the face of a stranger. Show us how to open doors and minds, build bridges and networks, that together we might grow in understanding, encourage one another with patience, serve each other with humility and love our neighbors as you so graciously love us. Come among us yet again, and lead us along the paths of peace, guiding us ever closer to the promised land of your imagining and to the reality of your Beloved Community.

Hear our prayers, spoken and unspoken. And hear us as we join together in the prayer that Jesus taught, saying: Our Father...

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR (depts)

#### OFFERING

Each of us has received a pledge card and an invitation to consider our gifts to this church in 2022. That card has a line for commitments to our congregation's ministries, and the meeting after worship will share details of how we've been putting those gifts to work, and invite input for the coming year. Below that line, there's one marked for our congregation's wider mission, and that money becomes part of "Our Church's Wider Mission" or OCWM, and is sent to the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ, and put to work throughout our Conference, across the country and in support of our ministry around the world. Specifically, 72% of it stays in our Conference and 28% goes on to the national UCC. The money that stays in the Conference helps to pay the salaries of our Conference Ministers, Mike Denton and Courtney Stange-Tragear; supports churches, clergy and our camps, people preparing for ministry, churches searching for a new pastor and in countless other ways. The past three years, during Lent, people within the Conference have been invited to write for a Lenten Devotional, and any one who's expressed interest has received a daily email of that writing. Throughout Covid, there have been multiple online groups, worship resources, and blog posts offering support and assistance while we've scrambled to meet unprecedented circumstances. Both the Conference and the national level of the UCC help us to address issues of climate change, political unrest and racial injustice, as well as supporting ministry in other parts of the world. There's a chart on the back wall of our narthex that shows some of these uses, and I'll gladly share other materials with you to help you understand the work of the wider church and the ways it uses our gifts.

Thank you for the ways you support and strengthen the ministry of our church, here in our community, across the Conference and around the world. Every gift, no matter how large or small, is blessed by God and put to good use to express the love of God and the care of Christ's church. Feel free to put your gifts and pledge card into the mail slot at the church or mail it to 408 Cedar Street.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (in unison)

**Gracious God, Eternal Source of all good gifts, You call us, your church, to share all that we have and all that we are with one another and the world. We remember the story of the widow who gave two small coins and know that you are more concerned with how we give than how much. Bless each offering, that together they may bring your kingdom into being in the broken places here and beyond. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

(Sue Henley, *Before the Amen*)

HYMN *“God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending”*

God, whose giving knows no ending, from your rich and endless store,  
Nature’s wonder, Jesus’ wisdom, costly cross, grave’s shattered door:  
Gifted by you, we turn to you offering up ourselves in praise;  
Thankful song shall rise forever, gracious donor of our days.

Skills and time are ours for serving, that your will on earth be done:  
All at peace in health and freedom, races joined, the Church made one.  
Now direct our daily labor, lest we strive for self alone;  
born with talents, make us servants fit to answer at your throne.

Treasure, too, you have entrusted, gain through power your grace conferred;  
Ours to use for home and kindred, and to spread the gospel Word.  
Open wide our hands in sharing as we heed Christ’s ageless call,  
Healing, teaching, and reclaiming, honoring you by loving all.

Lend your joy to all our giving, let it light our pilgrim way;  
From the night of anxious keeping, loose us into generous day.  
Then when years on earth are over, and we’ve lived our human span,  
God, fulfill beyond our dreaming, all our stewardship began.

BENEDICTION

Life is short. And we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us.  
So: be swift to love, and make haste to be kind. And may the blessing of God the source, Jesus the reconciler, and the Spirit who animates life be among us all. Amen.



They are like trees  
planted by streams of  
water, which yield their  
fruit in its season.  
Psalm 1: 3a

Rooted in

LOVE

# Rooted in Love

by Rev. Michael Neuroth

I've attended Hope UCC in Alexandria, VA for ten years. Our vision is to "Welcome, Nurture, Transform," seeking to embody Christ's love for one another and the wider community. Hope is a vibrant and warm congregation full of great people and important ministry. But that's not really why I give my time and money to Hope UCC. It is because Hope is the only congregation that my boys, ages 10 and 13, have ever known. It roots them in love. It roots them in love expressed in the public as justice. As we pass the peace around the sanctuary each week, they see every kind of person wishing them love and peace, sometimes even a too-tight hug. My boys have been taught the stories of our faith. They have learned about racism and white supremacy, how to stand up for justice and equality. My boys received cards and flowers when they lost their grandfather and kind words of encouragement in ZOOM chats over the past

year. My boys wait with anticipation each year for the summer Camp Hope theme to be announced. They know which adults they can turn to for advice and which ones tell the best sarcastic jokes. And it isn't just my kids that are being rooted in love at Hope UCC; it's me too.

I give to Hope and the wider mission of the UCC, believing that the roots of love we tend will one day spread seeds of justice and joy in the world. For me, that's a great investment in my boys, our family, and a shared future for all.

## CONSIDER YOUR PLEDGE AS A PERCENT OF YOUR MONTHLY INCOME.

Annual Income	Monthly Income	2%	3%	4%	5%	10%
16,000	1,333	27	40	53	67	133
20,000	1,667	33	50	67	83	167
25,000	2,083	42	62	83	104	208
30,000	2,500	50	75	100	125	250
35,000	2,917	58	88	117	146	292
40,000	3,333	67	100	133	167	333
45,000	3,750	75	113	150	188	375
50,000	4,167	83	125	167	208	417
60,000	5,000	100	150	200	250	500
75,000	6,250	125	188	250	313	625
100,000	8,333	167	250	333	417	833
125,000	10,417	208	313	417	521	1042

On average, Americans give 2% of their income to charity. Giving even 1% more of annual income to charity would be transformative for our congregation and other organizations doing good in our community.



**2022 PROPOSED BUDGET**

**United Church of Christ Congregational, Wallace, ID 83873**

**Proposed Budget draft November 14, 2021**

	<b>2021 Proposed Budget</b>	<b>2021 thru Sept</b>	<b>2021 Projected</b>	<b>2022 Proposed Budget</b>	<b>Budget (+/-)</b>
<b>INCOME CATEGORIES</b>					
Contributions	\$32,000	\$27,170	\$36,227	\$32,000	\$0
Loose offering	\$1,500	\$553	\$737	\$1,500	\$0
Corinthians support	\$600	\$400	\$533	\$600	\$0
Interest	\$25	\$7	\$9	\$25	\$0
Building use	\$500	\$0	\$0	\$500	\$0
Miscellaneous	\$1,000	\$1,266	\$1,688	\$1,000	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$35,625</b>	<b>\$29,396</b>	<b>\$39,195</b>	<b>\$35,625</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>EXPENSE CATEGORIES</b>					
Pastor – salary (5.9% COLA adjustment)	\$17,051	\$12,789	\$17,052	\$18,057	\$1,006
Pastor - benefits	\$6,000	\$4,500	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$0
Pastor - professional expenses	\$700	\$105	\$140	\$700	\$0
Pastor - pulpit supply	\$700	\$300	\$400	\$700	\$0
Building - utilities	\$7,000	\$3,747	\$4,996	\$5,000	-\$2,000
Building - insurance	\$4,702	\$4,702	\$6,269	\$4,702	\$0
Building - maintenance	\$3,000	\$0	\$0	\$3,000	\$0
Building - custodial services	\$3,000	\$625	\$833	\$3,000	\$0
Building - office supplies	\$200	\$160	\$213	\$200	\$0
Program - general	\$500	\$62	\$83	\$500	\$0
Program - devotionals	\$140	\$52	\$69	\$140	\$0
Program - advertising	\$100	\$81	\$108	\$100	\$0
Program - camp scholarships	\$200	\$0	\$0	\$200	\$0
Outreach - conference delegate expense	\$200	\$30	\$40	\$200	\$0
Outreach - conference dues	\$100	\$0	\$0	\$100	\$0
Miscellaneous	\$0	\$188	\$251	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$43,593</b>	<b>\$27,341</b>	<b>\$36,455</b>	<b>\$42,599</b>	<b>-\$994</b>
<b>DIFFERENCE</b>	<b>-\$7,968</b>	<b>\$2,055</b>	<b>\$2,740</b>	<b>-\$6,974</b>	<b>\$994</b>