

**Greetings** to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home,

**This Sunday is the second** Sunday in the season of Lent. Our Lenten worship series will focus on Psalm 51:1-12 and the theme of mercy.

**Lenten opportunities:**

**24<sup>th</sup> Annual Lenten Discussion Series:** This is a six-week program under the title: *Even the Cherry Blossom Falls* continues. Each session begins at 7 PM, all sessions are on consecutive Wednesday evenings and all will be offered through a Zoom link. The third session will be on Wednesday, March 3, featuring the Rev. Sherrill Willis from the Sunderland church. Her session title: **Thank God the Blossoms Fall!**

**The Franklin County Interfaith Council** Lenten Ecumenical and Interfaith program titled *Lifting the Veil: Racism in Franklin County* will be offering Part II of the three-part series at 7 PM on Thursday March 1. The flier for this program, including the Zoom link, is attached to this note.

Wishing you God's peace in the season of Lent

Pastor Rob

**Welcome to Sunday Worship**  
February 28, 2021  
The Second Sunday of Lent

**Good Morning** to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home. For this season of Lent a preaching series on the Psalms is being offered. This service is for the Second Sunday of Lent and centers itself on Psalm 51, its first twelve verses.

**Prayer Requests:** We are accepting requests for prayer (healing, comfort, thanksgiving, and others). Please send your requests to the Pastor at [pastor01089@gmail.com](mailto:pastor01089@gmail.com). Requests will then be sent out through our email list to the congregation for our common prayer life during the week. PLEASE remember that all prayer requests received become public knowledge. If you are uncertain if your request for another might be confidential, do not send it.

**And now let us be in worship**

**Call to Worship** (Responsive, L=Leader, P=People Psalm 33

L Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.

**P Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.**

L For our heart shall rejoice in the Lord because we have trusted in his holy name.

**Morning Unison Prayer & the Lord's** Based on Psalm 57

Be merciful to me, O God, for my soul trusts in you. In the shadow of your wings, I will make my refuge. My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise. I will

praise you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to you among the nations. For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens and your truth unto the clouds. Hear now this our gathered prayer that Christ did teach, saying...*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.*

## **Prayers of the People**

Today's prayers center themselves on God's mercy. There will be time for personal prayer and meditation. Let us come before God in prayer.

This is the season of Lent, O God. Another one. Not like the last one. The last one we stopped. We closed. We sheltered. We were anxious, confused, and uncertain. We prayed. We waited. We cried out. Have mercy, O God. This time I am still anxious, still praying and waiting for this to come to an end. I cry out. Have mercy, O God. This is the season of Lent. Another one. It is like so many others. I am invited, once again, to reflect on myself, on my strength of character, my depth of faith, my dedication and devotion as a Christian. I am supposed to take my own measure and see if I am wanting. I am wanting, O God. I want so much, I yearn for so much, and what I want often has nothing to do with what I need, what others need, even the needs of those that I love. I am tempted to turn inward in my incessant self-centered wants. I cry out, have mercy, O God. This is the season of Lent, forty days when we used to fast. We marked each day and we humbled ourselves before you. I look for humility in my life. I search for humility in my community and my nation. I see it in the downtrodden, in those who have experienced your love in their time of trial, in those who live in gratitude, and in those who have understand that life is unrelenting loss. Where else do I see humility? I cry out, have mercy, O God. This is the season of Lent, O God. A time of penitent joy. A time of exploring my lack of determination, lack of resolve, lack of enthusiasm for your vision of creation, your vision of love, and your vision of peace. I am called to lay bare the sins of my nature and I find no joy in this. I find that I am gifted at laying bare the sins of others, even those I do not know, even based on evidence I do not have, and I find joy in this if I

am honest. Where do I see your vision? Where do I see your love? Where do I see your peace? I investigate myself and without joy I cry, have mercy, O God. This is the bleak midwinter season of my faith. It is intensely personal, deeply disturbing in its rigor, relentless in its quest for the searching out of truth. In this season, as in all the others, I come before you, O God, in prayer in the hopes of finding your truth and my way.

(Personal Prayer and Meditation)

This is the season of Lent, O God, even as I cry to you for mercy for my wayward nature, I pray to find that joy of your love and your peace that will move me ever forward till the time I see you face to face. Amen.

### **Scripture Reading:** Psalm 51:1-12

In the second book of Samuel the story is told that David, while walking on the roof of his palace, saw Bathsheba, who was then the wife of Uriah, having a bath. He immediately desired her and later caused her pregnancy. In an effort to conceal his sin, the king gave the order to his general that Uriah should be placed in the front lines of battle, where he died in combat. David made the now widowed Bathsheba his wife. David's action was displeasing to the Lord, who accordingly sent Nathan the prophet to reprove the king. The king at once confessed his sin and expressed sincere repentance. Bathsheba's child by David was struck with a severe illness and died a few days after birth, which the king accepted as his punishment. Psalm 51 was written by King David after the prophet confronted him following his adultery with Bathsheba. It is often referred to as the Miserere, meaning "God Have Mercy."

During this season of Lent, readings from the Book of Psalms have illustrated the themes for each of the Sundays. Our Theme for the Second Sunday of Lent is Mercy.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.

Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.  
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.  
Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain in me a willing spirit.

After the reading, you may reflect on this passage.  
The sermon for this text may be seen in this week's video.

**Sermon:** *The Psalms: A Lenten Vocabulary - Mercy*

**Benediction:** #179, *Were You There*, First Verse

*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*