



**COMMUNITY CHURCH OF WALKER
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**
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“No matter who you are, or where you are, you are welcome here!”

***“Heaven Opened”
First Sunday after Epiphany
“Baptism of the Lord”
January 12, 2025 – 10:00 a.m.***

**Worship Leaders:
Pastor: Michael Small
Liturgist: Chris Kolp
Special Music: Jo and Ryan Pels
Greeter: Ruth and Earl Niedermann
Keyboard: Sabbastian Wilson-Webb**

**Tech: Ace Diehl (Video), Esther Covert (Audio)
Spiritual Life, Chancel and Communion Preparation**

PRELUDE

WORDS OF WELCOME

† **HYMN** **“Jesus Calls Us, o’er the Tumult”** (vss. 1, 3, 4, 5) #172

CALL TO WORSHIP *(Inspired by Sirach 24)*

One: Come, beloved of God, to remember who you are and whose you are.

All: God in Christ, has named us all “Beloved.”

One: Yes, here and now, God’s heaven of love is being poured out anew.

All: May this motion of the Holy One, shape our hearts and minds.

One: May it brighten the Epiphany light in us and the whole creation.

All: And may it shape our words and work into good news for the world!

A TIME OF CENTERING

(During this time of centering, open your hearts to God; be in the present, here and now.)

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

† For those who are able, please stand.

All: Holy One, awaken us again to Your outpouring Spirit of Love. Through this generous gift, stretch our souls wide and form us into channels of your healing grace. Gift us with an ability to recognize You in each other, all imprinted with Your beloved blessing. Clarify our intentions, purify our actions, fill our words with grace and our hearts with hope. Yes, soak our thinking, our praying, our hoping, our everything in You. Amen.

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

All: Loving God, let me enter again Your baptismal river of grace. Let it soak every stain attached to the fabric of my life and longings. Yes, Holy One, submerge me in You again and again and again. Cleanse every distracting impulse luring me away from You who are my heart's deepest desire. Let no urgency be more important than Your forgiving love, always transforming. Today, help me choose you above every temptation that lures me to worship lesser things. By this of You, forgive me, renew me, and grant me the grace promised by You in Jesus Christ. Amen.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

(Each person can take this time to surrender to God privately anything weighing heavy on their heart.)

WORDS OF GRACE

One: Before we thought to turn to God, God already turned toward us in love. The saturating grace of God is trustworthy and true. Our prayers of transformation have been met with God's outpouring of forgiving love. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

† PASSING THE PEACE

One: The Peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also, with you.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Jo and Ryan Pels

Focus Scripture: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 *Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible* (p. 2226). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Kindle Edition.

¹⁵ The people were full of anticipation, wondering in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all by saying, "I am baptizing you in water, but someone is coming who is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not fit to untie! This One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire. ¹⁷ A winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear the threshing floor and gather the wheat into the granary, but the chaff

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will be burnt in unquenchable fire.”¹⁸ Using exhortations like this, John proclaimed the Good News to the people.

¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch—whom John rebuked for his wickedness, including his relationship with his sister-in-law, Herodias—²⁰ committed another crime by throwing John into prison.²¹ When all the people were baptized, Jesus also came to be baptized. And while Jesus was praying, the skies opened²² and the Holy Spirit descended on the Anointed One in visible form, like a dove. A voice from heaven said, “You are my Own, my Beloved. On you my favor rests.”

REFLECTION “You are my Own, my Beloved”

HYMN “How Firm a Foundation” (vss. 1, 2, 3) #407

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE/PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD’S PRAYER (*Unison, using debts*)

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.

SPECIAL MUSIC Jo and Ryan Pels

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

One: The outpouring of God’s spirit described in the baptism of Jesus reminds us that God’s very nature is generous, self-giving love. It is the source of our deepest joy. When we open our hearts in generous giving, we give space for God’s love and joy to grow in us for the good of others. May our hearts be stretched wide by this motion of the Holy One, as we joyfully bring our gifts.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

DOXOLOGY: (*as collection plates come forward*) Tune #780

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit One. Amen.**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING

One: O Gracious God, we thank you for the invitation to grow through giving, made possible by Your outpouring spirit. May these gifts we bring be used to form ever-

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new blessings in this congregation and around the world. And may our lives be the instruments of love and joy you desire. Amen.

† HYMN

“Go, My Children, with My Blessing” (vss. 1, 2)

#82

PARTING WORDS

One: O Gracious God, we thank you for the invitation to grow through giving, made possible by Your outpouring spirit. May these gifts we bring be used to form ever-new blessings in this congregation and around the world. And may our lives be the instruments of love and joy you desire. Amen.

POSTLUDE

WI-FI – “Guest” Scan QR Code for Internet Access



Heaven Opened: Service Prayers for the Baptism of Christ was written by the Rev. Dr. David Long-Higgins, Conference Minister of the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ.

