

# The Word Among Us

*A Weekly Note from Pastor Michael*

*Thursday, June 11, 2026*

*The Federated Church of Chagrin Falls*

One of the gifts of worship is that the sermon does not end when the preacher sits down. If we are listening well, the Word keeps working among us — in conversation, in questions, in prayer, at the Table, and in the life we carry with us into the week.

After worship this past Sunday, I heard from several people who were still reflecting on the question of belonging. Who belongs at the Table? Who is beloved by God? Who do we imagine is outside the reach of grace?

Again and again, the Gospel shows us Jesus moving toward the people others found suspect, unworthy, foreign, or even unclean. Jesus stretches the boundaries of belonging because no human category can contain the living God. The Word through whom all things were made is still taking on flesh among us — at tables, in bodies, through mercy, and among people we did not yet know how to call beloved

*In other words, the new wine of God needs new wineskins that can stretch.  
(Matthew 9:17)*

That is part of what I hope our life around Scripture can become together.

In a federated church like ours, no single voice or tradition carries the whole conversation. We are not passive recipients of someone else's conclusions. We are participants in the life of God — participants in the unfolding of the Word taking on flesh among us. My role is not simply to tell you what to believe. My role is to wrestle with the text faithfully, listen for the Spirit, attend to the life of the church, and help us enter the conversation together.

And how exciting is that! We get to be participants in God's story!

This week, our Gospel reading will be Matthew 9:35–10:8. Jesus sees the crowds and has compassion for them because they are “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Then he gathers his disciples, gives them authority, and sends them with this proclamation: “The kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Before Sunday, I invite you to read the passage once or twice and sit with a few questions:

What does it mean for the kingdom of heaven to “come near”?

Where do you see people who are harassed, helpless, hungry, afraid, or weary?

What have we freely received from God that we are now being called to freely give?

We come to worship not only to hear a sermon, but to encounter the living Word together. We listen. We pray. We receive. We wrestle. And by grace, we become part of the Word taking on flesh for the healing of the world.

You might bring one of those questions with you this Sunday.

Faithfully Yours,  
—*Pastor Michael*