

First Congregational United Church of Christ

*Empowered by the Holy Spirit and with the help of God,
we open our doors and hearts to all, in service and love as modeled by Jesus Christ.*



Sixth Sunday of Easter

A Recognition of Our Scholarship Recipients

Celebrating Diversity

*The Lord's Day
Sixth Sunday of Easter
A Recognition of Our Scholarship Recipients
Celebrating Diversity
Ten o'clock in the Morning
The Worship of God*

Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by God's holiness; the nourishment of the mind with God's truth; the purifying of the imagination by God's beauty; the opening of the heart to God's love; the surrender of the will to God's purpose—all of this gathered up in adoration.

~William Temple

The Prologue

Once every three years, the lectionary invites us to visit the ancient city of Athens, Greece, the centerpiece, the very epicenter of Hellenistic culture, the intellectual enclave of philosophers and the intellectually curious. Once upon a time, the Apostle Paul visited Athens and toured all its incredible sights, including its amazing monuments, no doubt overwhelmed by the majesty of its temples and pagan idols. While in that city, Paul gave one of his most intuitive, intellectually astute sermons, recorded in perpetuity in the Book of Acts. Rather than insulting the locals because of their religious pluralism, an interfaith smorgasbord, Paul applauds their diversity, suggesting that only one thing was lacking among their myriad deities. They were completely unaware of the Hebrew God, Yahweh, and God's special offspring, our brother and friend, Jesus of Nazareth, the one called Christ. Paul reminds his listeners that all of us are God's offspring, creating a relationship that is as up close and personal, as intimate as can be humanly imagined. Today, we explore another dimension of celebrating diversity.

Gathering Music

The Proclamation

An Ancient Easter Acclamation

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Call to Worship and Welcome

The Spirit of the still speaking God be with you.

And also with you.

The Music for Contemplation

The Lighting of the Altar Candles

The Gathering

Come and bless God, all you people! Let the sound of God's praise be heard in the sanctuary!

Blessed be the One in whom we “live and move and have our being,” the One in whom we give thanks for our very existence!

Gather to worship the One who comes to us as One unknown, revealed to us in the person of Jesus, the One called Christ!

God's very being is in all of creation, in everything that surrounds us!

Let us worship God!

The Introit

In the Garden

arr. John Behnke

Chime Choir

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

Unknown God, we have come to worship the One who comes to us as advocate, as holy companion, whose Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, is pervasive throughout the world in countless ways; we have gathered to bless our God in the midst of this people, the One who comes to us as One unknown, revealed as Holy Other, Ground of All Being, Great Spirit of the Universe, far beyond the grasp of the limited capacity of our imagination, and yet, as One whose presence is manifest in the vast universe of an infinite creation; remove our shallow images, the human-crafted idols of our creation that cheapen the Holy, material things, artistic expressions often exhibited in graven images of gold, silver, or stone, things valued by the short-sightedness of our finite human limitations; help us downsize, empowering us to come into your holy presence this day; all this we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the holy and still speaking Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

*The Opening Hymn (insert)

All Are Welcome

TWO OAKS

*The Litany of Praise

Bless God, all you people! Let the sound of God's praise be heard among the living!

All praise to God, who holds us within the safety of a secure net, refusing to let anyone fall!

The Holy One has tested us and tried us, bringing us through fire and water!

All praise to the Holy, who has brought us to a spacious setting, hearing our cries amidst all trouble!

Bring before the Holy offerings of praise, telling the great things God has done! The Holy One rejects not our prayers, but listens, giving heed to their words!

All praise to the blessed One whose steadfast love endures forever, the One who is always with us! Praise the Lord!

*The Gloria

GREATOREX

*Glory to the Creator, and to the Christ, and to the Comforter!
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end! Amen! Amen!*

The Call to Confession¹

We have been baptized and claimed in the name of Christ Jesus for a lifetime of service. Yet, we are often intimidated by our fears and seduced by our fantasies. It is far easier to live in isolation, affirming autonomy while denying community. We would rather pretend that those around us think the way we do because divergent opinions disturb us. Celebrating diversity is never as easy as it sounds, but takes a great deal of effort, a great deal of work, a whole lot of intentionality. The easy temptation is to ignore the commandments God has given us, failing to discipline ourselves in obedience! In the silence and stillness of these moments, let us confess before the Holy.

The Silent Confession

The Corporate Confession²

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of our unknowing, we confess that it takes less effort to love our own way rather than the way Jesus taught us. The Spirit of truth is hidden from us when our actions belie the words of praise we utter in worship. It is easy to neglect the spiritual disciplines that would draw us close to you and the caring outreach that would link us with sisters and brothers who need to know of your love. We often fail to witness to our faith in ways that are disturbing, powerful enough to evoke opposition or cause us to suffer even in the least. We have learned how hard it is to follow Jesus! Forgive us, teach us, help us!

The Assurance of Pardon³

Beloved faith community, hear the good news of Eastertide. You are not left to struggle alone! You have an advocate, a holy companion who is always with you. You are not rejected! God hears your prayers and offers you steadfast love in all circumstances. Do not be afraid to hope and to share that hope with others around you. Claim God's gifts of reverence and gentleness as you seek to live Christ's gospel!

Thanks be to God!

The Witness from the Christian Scriptures

ACTS 17:22-31

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way! For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found

among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god!’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you! The God who made the world and everything in it, God who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is God served by human hands, as though God needed anything, since God gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor God made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and God allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for God and find God—though indeed God is not far from each one of us. For ‘In God we live and move and have our being!’ As even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we, too, are God’s offspring.’ Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now God commands all people everywhere to repent, because God has fixed a day on which God will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom God has appointed, and of this God has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead!”

Listen to what the Spirit of the still speaking God is saying!

Thanks be to God!

The Response: PSALM 66:8-20

ST. PETER

*O bless the Lord, you peoples, all! Let songs of praise resound!
For in the midst of our distress, God’s presence can be found!*

*The ancient law required of us burnt off’rings for our part!
But as a nobler sacrifice, we offer God our hearts!*

*Would that the world in ev’ry place knew God as we have known!
God shares our joy, and in our grief will leave us not alone!*

*Bless God, all you who would the lies of sinful lips disprove!
With truth God shall sustain our way, our lives with steadfast love!*

The Witness from the Gospels

JOHN 14:15-21

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments! And I will ask the Father, and God will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever! This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees the Father nor knows the Father. You know God because God abides with you, and God will be in you! I will not leave you orphaned! I am coming to you! In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me! Because I live, you also will live! On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you! They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them!”

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon
The Music for Meditation
The Concerns of the Church
The Recognition of Our Scholarship Recipients

Overlooking Ignorance!

Timothy W. Shirley

The Pastoral Prayer
The Lord's Prayer

**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.**

The Receiving of Our Gifts
The Offertory
*The Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Christ all creatures here below!
Praise Holy Spirit, evermore!
Praise triune God whom we adore!*

*The Prayer of Thanksgiving
*The Closing Hymn, No. 687
*The Procession of the Light
*The Benediction and Blessing

In Christ There Is No East or West

ST. PETER

To our guests! At your choosing, we invite you to join us in a long-standing tradition at First Congregational United Church of Christ as we form a circle as one, joining hands and singing together our Fellowship Song.

*The Fellowship Song

Let There Be Peace on Earth

WORLD PEACE

*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.
With every step I take, let this be my joyous creed.
To take each moment and live each moment in peace, eternally!
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*

The Music for Reflection

*You are invited to stand as you are able.

***The flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given by
William and Ursula Charaf in celebration of their sixty-first wedding anniversary.***

Lector: Tobi Johannsen

Ushers: Kamie Kolb and Mark Johannsen

*The color for the Season of Eastertide is white,
symbolizing purity and victory, and reminding us of
Jesus' victory over death on the cross and his glorious resurrection.*

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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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