

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.*



Fifth Sunday of Easter

*The Lord's Day
Fifth Sunday of Easter
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

Though usually reserved for funerals and memorial services, providing much needed comfort and succor to those who are grieving, the first fourteen verses of John's Gospel offer a theological smorgasbord to the reader, giving insight into the special relationship between Jesus and his God, the One he intimately knew and related to as Abba, as Father, as holy parent. But there is one verse politely tucked away in the narrative that has oft been quoted as a proof text, arguing for and justifying Christian exclusivity. Jesus is quoted as saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life! No one comes to the Father except through me!" This short verse has served to defend a Christian bias and exclusiveness, a religious elitism including narrow formulas for prayer and salvation, making Christian responses the only acceptable engagement of the Holy. Today, we go deeper into these mysteries, exploring more fully this narrative, searching for possibilities allowing for a broader and more expansive interpretation, hopefully opening further avenues, creating the potential of revealing God's "extravagant welcome."

Gathering Music

The Proclamation

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

An Ancient Easter Acclamation

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

Gather as one in this sacred setting as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, as God's own possession, giving glory to God!

In these moments together, we long to be filled with the Holy Spirit! The heavens of the Holy are opened before us, allowing us to taste the goodness of God!

Come, seeking the One who is our rock of refuge, a living stone, a faithful God into whose hands we have placed our spirits!

The face of God shines upon us as a holy priesthood! Our spiritual sacrifices are made acceptable before the One who is faithful and merciful!

Let us worship God!

The Introit, No. 64 (*Chalice Praise*) *More Precious Than Silver*

Lynn DeShazo

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

Faithfully inclusive God, we have gathered to worship the One who has called us together as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession, to proclaim the mighty works of the Christ in the world; we give praise to the One who has called us out of darkness into God's marvelous light; fill us with your Holy Spirit, welcoming God, that we might see your glory and taste the goodness of God; accept our gifts of worship from this spiritual house and may your face shine upon us in this hour with your steadfast love; 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, No. 15 *Rejoice, You Pure in Heart*

MARION

*The Litany of Praise

The Holy One is our refuge, never putting us to shame, but always delivering us in righteousness!

Incline your ear to us! Rescue us from all that separates us from you and from one another! Be a rock of refuge for us, a strong fortress to save us!

God is our rock, a protective fortress who leads and guides us for the sake of the name of the Holy One!

Remove us from the snares that threaten us! Our spirits are in your hands!

God is faithful to redeem us, delivering us from our enemies and those who would persecute us!

Let your face so shine upon your servants, faithfully loving God, even as you save us in your steadfast love! 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 are all called to accountability! Our doubts and questions are never excuses for irresponsible behavior, especially in terms of how we relate to our neighbors. Unfortunately, we often disobey what we believe is a word from God, rejecting the One who revealed God's love. When we lack faith, we are unable to trust, incapable of seeing the goodness of God. Let us seek God's mercy and forgiveness! 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,

Extravagantly welcoming God, we confess that we sometimes cover our ears to avoid hearing any word of judgment. We would desire to insulate ourselves from a world in pain. When we lack social justice, it is as if we are guilty of persecuting the Christ who identified with all persons, specifically the poor, the needy, and all oppressed people, any who live on the fringes, who meet the criteria of the disenfranchised and marginalized of society. We often reject the one you sent as the way, the truth, and the life. For the most part, we fail to pray as Jesus prayed, lacking trust in your willingness to hear and respond to our supplications. Inclusive God, deliver us from ourselves!

The Assurance of Pardon³

Beloved faith community, hear the good news of Eastertide. Let not your hearts be troubled! Whoever trusts in God will not be put to shame. If you have faith in God, you will show it in your care for others. When you care, you will join in doing the things Jesus did to help all the people God loves. You are chosen to proclaim the mighty acts of One who called you out of the shadows into God's marvelous light. Rejoice! You have received the mercy of God!

Thanks be to God!

The Anthem

Be Strong
Chancel Choir

Kirk Robertson; arr. David Das

The Witness from the Epistles

I PETER 2:2-10

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation! If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good! Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For

it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame!” This honor, then, is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe! “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner!” And “A stone that makes them stumble and a rock that makes them fall!” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light! Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people! Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy!

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

Thanks be to God!

The Response: PSALM 31

WINCHESTER NEW

O Lord, in whom our souls confide, our refuge sure amid the strife!

O let us know in shame reside, but through your grace reclaim our lives!

Be now our rock, our sure defense, our fortress which no force can break!

Remain our guide and lead us forth to praise you for your mercy’s sake!

Our life, our days, are in your hand, naught can the threat of death remove!

Turn now to us your shining face, and save us through your steadfast love!

The Witness from the Gospels

JOHN 14:1-14

“Do not let your hearts be troubled! Believe in God! Believe also in me! In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places! If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going!” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going! How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life! No one comes to the Father except through me! If you know me, you will know my Father also! From now on you do know God and have seen God!” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied!” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father! How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Father who dwells in me does the works of God. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, but if you do not, then believe because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father! I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son! If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it!”

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon

A Way Out of One Way!

Timothy W. Shirley

The Music for Meditation

The Service of Holy Communion

The Concerns of the Church

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. 618

How Firm a Foundation

FOUNDATION

*The Procession of the Light

*The Benediction and Blessing

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 Mark and Tobi Johannsen in memory of Tobi's sisters and brother who passed away sixty years ago this month.

Lector: Barbara Helmick

Ushers: Susan Krivichi

*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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