

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.*



*Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

*The Lord's Day
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Nine 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

In recent years analysts of all things church, ecclesial consultants of many stripes, have put a lot of effort, time, and energy into studying congregational dynamics. Through Family Systems Theory, specifically the research put forth by Murray Bowen and best illustrated by Edwin H. Friedman in his book *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, leadership and congregants can learn to identify potential sources of trouble and can work, to not only avoid difficulties, but to navigate conflict while modeling healthy communal practice. In today's Witness from the Hebrew Bible in Genesis we read perhaps the quintessential example of a dysfunctional family at work in the sibling rivalry and maternal meddling in the story of Jacob and Esau. It was a family feud on steroids, a dumpster fire of epic proportions, literally one for the ages! They were two seeds not of the same spirit!

Gathering Music

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

Set your minds on the Holy Spirit of life as you worship One who is always graciously loving, leading us with freedom, mercy, peace, and joy!

We gather before One whose word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path!

Listen to the voice of the Holy, inquiring of the Lord amidst all the people!

Accept our offerings of praise, teaching us the ways of God, coming before the Holy One in this sacred hour of worship!

Let us worship God!

The Introit (insert)

Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil

Handt Hanson

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

Spirit of life and peace, we have come into this holy place to inquire of the Lord this day, to listen to the One whose word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path; sow your seed among us this day, that we might set our minds on you, enabling us to hear your word and bear fruit in your name; 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. 2

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

HYMN TO JOY

*The Litany of Praise

The word of the Holy One is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path!

We have sworn an oath to the Holy, confirming our vow that we will observe God's righteous ordinances!

Our life-giving God illuminates our pathways with a holy word!

Accept our offerings of praise even as you teach us your ways!

God's laws are never forgotten! The decrees of the Holy are the joy of our hearts, our heritage forever!

Our hearts are inclined to perform God's statutes for all time! Our minds are geared to serve God to the very end! 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 gathered to find release from the cares of life which sap our energy and depress our spirits.

We have come seeking deeper roots for our faith and the ability to survive and thrive amid life's thorny pathways. We open all the hidden places of our lives to the light of God's forgiving love, that we might be cleansed, healed, and set free from all that limits our human capacity. God knows our need for this time of confession. 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,

Cultivating God, we know you understand us more deeply than we understand ourselves. You know how much the cares of this life impede our progress. Our thoughts and actions are often very shortsighted. We take so much for granted, failing to value the wonder of life all around us, the gift of family and friends, beloved faith community, the amazing reality of your Holy Spirit dwelling within us. We want to be like good soil, receiving the seed of your word with an understanding that nourishes strong roots, a harvest of trust and joy. Free us from all that keeps us from bearing fruit for you.

The Assurance of Pardon³

Beloved faith community, hear the good news. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. As disciples of Jesus, we have the opportunity to grow in understanding and in the joy of serving others in Christ's name. The Spirit of life sets us free from our narrow concerns to celebrate the good within and around us. Life is transformed by our new attitude of gratitude!

Thanks be to God!

The Time for the Children

Carol Marshall and Friends

The Witness from the Epistles

ROMANS 8:1-11

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do! By sending God's own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, God condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God! It does not submit to God's law indeed, it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through the Spirit that dwells in you!

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

Thanks be to God!

*Your word, O Lord, a lamp shall be to guide our feet, to light our way!
The darkest path unto our prize by your rich grace is bright as day!*

*Revive, now God, our fainting souls! Be now our stay amid distress!
Teach us your law, that we may live a life renewed in righteousness!*

*Our heritage, your lasting word, which through the years, is ever sure!
May we reflect your constant love and know your truth shall long endure!*

The Witness from the Gospels

MATTHEW 13:1-9, 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow! And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil. And they sprang up quickly since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty! If you have ears, hear! Hear, then, the parable of the sower. 'When anyone hears the word of the realm of God and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart. This is what was sown on the path! As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. Yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while. When trouble or persecution arises on account of the word that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty!'"

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon

Dysfunction Junction!

Timothy W. Shirley

The Anthem

Be Thou My Vision

arr. Luke Woodard

Chancel Choir

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. 5 *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*

AZMON

*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 thanksgiving for all God's blessings.***

Lector: Doug Malinsky

Ushers: Mary Lou Congdon and Mike Mettler

The color for the Season after Pentecost is Green, symbolizing the growth and development of the Church. Various symbols of the Trinity, such as the Trefoil and Triangle designs are frequently used to remind us of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the Triune nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Parent, Child, Advocate, Comforter, and Holy Companion; our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

Ordinary Time refers to that part of the Church Year that does not fall within one of the major seasons and does not observe any specific aspect of the Mystery of Christ. It consists of thirty-four Sundays in the liturgical year and emphasizes personal faith development and nurture, and the growth and enhancement of the Church and the churches. Ordinary Time begins with Baptism of the Lord and encompasses the Sundays after Epiphany including Transfiguration and the Sundays after Pentecost including Reign of Christ. An interesting bit of liturgical trivia is that Baptism of the Lord is counted but is not named as the first Sunday in Ordinary Time.

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