

# 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.*



*Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Twenty First Sunday in Ordinary Time*

*The Lord's Day  
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Twenty First 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**

Today's Witness from the Gospels in Matthew is a pivotal text driving the Gospel narratives. As with many texts guiding and informing the biblical narrative, there is far more in this reported sparring between Peter and Jesus than meets the eye. The hard truth of this text is that, according to most scholars, this conversation between the Christ and the Rock most likely never took place, but in all probability is an exchange added to the Jesus story after the "followers of the way," as Christians were first called, were unceremoniously kicked out of the synagogues, and fed to the ravenous wolves of Rome around 70CE. Jesus was Jewish and never converted to Christianity and would have had no clue what a Christian might be! It is a shocking idea, the concept of which might have even horrified him. Jesus might have considered it an egregious heresy of the highest order! Jesus was Jewish and remained a Jew all his life. His goal was to reform Judaism, the faith-tradition of his birth. In light of this revelatory reality, what relevant word might this text offer the Church in our contemporary settings today? For over two thousand years, the Church has been working to make the most, the best, out of what once was a bad situation!

### **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

We have gathered to learn of the Holy even as we have longed to know the Christ, the one called Messiah, claimed to be the son of the living God!

**As one body with many members we come to this place with our own unique perspective, our own understanding!**

Brothers and sisters, present yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God as is your spiritual worship!

**With all our thoughts, we gather as beloved faith community! May God bless us on this incredible journey through these liturgical rituals of word and song!**

Let us worship God!

## The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of pharaohs and the faithful, we gather as a local expression of the Church, universal, holy, apostolic, and catholic in every way; on this rock that is our faith, we gather to worship you; as brothers and sisters, siblings of the Christ, the one called Messiah, the one claimed to be the son of the living God, we present ourselves to you this day as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable before the Lord, which is our spiritual worship; we gather before you as many members of one body, all touched by your grace to discern your will in our midst, all that is good and acceptable and perfect; renew our minds this day, that we might come to know you better as children gifted to serve the Most High; 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. 709 *Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken* AUSTRIAN HYMN

\*The Litany of Praise

Surely the Lord is not just on our side, but on the side of everyone, standing with all people everywhere! If it were not so, our lives would surely show it!

**God remembers us even when we forget the Holy One! God blesses us even when our faith is lacking!**

With praise and thanksgiving, we present ourselves as living sacrifices to God!

**God has made us holy and acceptable by the richness of mercy! Our help is in the name of the One who made heaven and earth!**

Give thanks to God, the One who renews our minds that we may learn the will of the Holy One, discerning all that is good and acceptable and perfect!

**We are many members but are one body in Christ, all members one of another!  
We are graced with just the right measure of faith! Praise the Lord!**

*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 Confession<sup>1</sup>

We, who look with horror at the oppression of the pharaohs of Egypt, need to view our own privileged positions. We, like the ancient rulers, enjoy the fruits of the hard labor of others, the benefits of their slave-like toil. We eat food picked by migrant laborers and wear clothing sewn in sweatshops. Unfortunately, social justice seems to always interestingly stop right at our doorstep, allowing us to overlook our complicity in failing to affect needed change. Our insensitivity separates us from God and from others. In the silence and stillness of these moments, let us confess before the Holy.

### The Silent Confession

#### The Corporate Confession<sup>2</sup>

Let us pray to the Lord,

**God of the faithful and pharaohs everywhere, we often forget that we are among the rich oppressors of this world. We pretend that we are poor when we know we are not. It frustrates us when we cannot have everything we want. Keep us from misusing the power we have. We confess our fear of those who are unlike us. We set up barriers and borders against them when we are afraid. Keep us from acting in ways that alienate and divide, creating walls between us. When we are tempted to conform to the world's standards, set before us the higher model of sacrifice and service that is given to us in Jesus.**

#### The Assurance of Pardon<sup>3</sup>

Beloved faith community, hear the good news. God gives us grace to think with sober judgment and to act with confident faith. By that grace, we have unique gifts to use within the body of Christ. God forgives and heals and empowers us with new insights and expanded capacity to serve. In humble obedience, we learn the joy of following Jesus and living for the highest good for all.

**Thanks be to God!**

### The Time for the Children

#### The Witness from the Epistles

ROMANS 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body, we have many members and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in

Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness!

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

**Thanks be to God!**

The Singing Response: PSALM 124

NEW BRITAIN

*If God had not been on our side, when wars around us rose,  
Who would have been the sure defense against our mortal foes?*

*Their anger at our presence raged, their wrath, a swelling tide,  
To draw us underneath the flood, were God not at our side!*

*The Lord be praised, at whose right hand our enemies are stayed!  
Our lasting shield, the name of God, who heaven and earth has made!*

The Witness from the Gospels

MATTHEW 16:13-20

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the realm of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven!” Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah!

The Gospel for today!

**Thanks be to God!**

The Sermon

*Who Do You Think You Foolin!*

Timothy W. Shirley

The Music for Meditation

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 Closing Hymn, No. 67

*O God, Our Help in Ages Past*

ST. ANNE

\*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.

Lector: Sandra Mettler

Ushers: Woody Chenault 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.*

<sup>1-3</sup> Reprinted by permission United Church Press from *Taught by Love*, by Lavon Bayler. Copyright 2002 by the Pilgrim Press.

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# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## **CHURCH STAFF**

*Timothy W. Shirley, Pastor*  
*Debbie Brown, Church Administrator*  
*Sharon Breit, Director of Christian Education*  
*Lori Lee Hunter, Director of Music*  
*Norma Yaeger, Pianist*  
*Christine Clough, Cleaning Service*

## **CHURCH COUNCIL**

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*Scholarship, Ursula Charaf*  
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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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