

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.*



*Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Twenty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time*

*The Lord's Day
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Twenty Third 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

One of the challenges of being and doing church together as beloved faith community is the ability to communicate, to carry out holy conversation, to engage in open and honest debate and dialogue as the locally gathered people of God. Transparency, buoyed by authentic, genuine, heart-felt, mind-enlightened information is a particularly challenging task when impacted by the presence of a broad diversity, especially in terms of ecclesiology and theology. Managing polarities suddenly becomes a very difficult high-wire act for everyone involved. The old joke has often been told that where two or three church members are gathered, conflict will rage, a fight will ensue. The Witness from the Gospels in Matthew today gives us some very sage advice, some timely wisdom that all congregants should heed in the living of these days where polarization and rancor seem to be the order of the day, a dimly flickering light poorly guiding our paths.

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

Praising the Holy One, singing a new song in the assembly of the faithful, come and worship the One who delivers all people everywhere!

Where two or more are gathered in Jesus' name, God in Christ is in the midst of them!

Gathered as children of the Holy One, rejoice in God, the maker of us all! Celebrate this festival day, exulting in glory as the faithful of God!

With dancing in our hearts, we praise the name of the Holy, making melody as instruments of praise!

Let us worship God!

The Introit (insert)

Bind Us Together

Bob Gillman

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

God our maker, we have gathered to worship the God of passovers and makeovers, the One who has brought us out of the bondage of all that diminishes our humanity, all that hinders our best efforts to be your holy people; we long to experience the freedom Christ offers us as your faithful flock gathered here; be with us as we bring our praises before the Holy One; may this be a day to remember, a festival day celebrated before our God; do not pass over us this day, for we long for your presence among us in this sacred space and time; 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. 23 *Praise, My Soul, the God of Heaven* LAUDA ANIMA

*The Litany of Praise

Praise the Lord! Sing a new song to God! Sing God's praise in the assembly of the faithful!

Let all the people be glad in God, our creator! Let all the children of God rejoice in the Holy One!

With dancing and singing, let us praise the name of the Holy One, making melody with all our glorious voices raised in adoration!

For the Holy One takes pleasure in all people, adorning all human creation with a victorious honor befitting our glorious celebration in worship!

Let the faithful exult in the glory of God, singing with joy, declaring God's majesty everywhere we find ourselves!

With high praises, our voices declare the glory of God granted to all who are faithful! 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 Confession¹

Our ancestors in the faith sometimes sought vengeance on their enemies. Jesus challenged his friends to listen and urged reconciliation among those who harbored disagreements while holding grudges. Paul counseled followers to put away quarreling, jealousy, and harmful behavior. There is much in our lives that is detrimental to us, diminishing our best selves, having the capacity to negatively impact others. There is much in our lives that leads to broken relationships and lasting pain. 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 passovers and do overs, we have sometimes failed to be faithful to your commands. Sometimes, we have a quick trigger, more ready to condemn than to console, more eager to justify ourselves than to work for understanding. Sometimes, we feed the flames of dissent instead of welcoming the liberating power of forgiveness. On our worst days, when we gather as two or three, it is not to welcome or bask in your presence, but to needlessly converse about lesser, more trivial, inane kinds of things. Turn us around to a new way of being.

The Assurance of Pardon³

Beloved faith community, hear the good news! Salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers. God's healing presence has come among us and dwells within us. Our openness to God's transforming love releases in us the potential for wholeness. We will be amazed at what we can do and who we can be as humble, joyous followers of the one who for us in our experience, is the way, the truth, and the life.

Thanks be to God!

The Time for the Children

Nancy Diepenbrock

The Witness from the Hebrew Bible

EXODUS 12:1-14

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall mark for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one! The lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month. Then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall

take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night. They shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning. Anything that remains until the morning you shall burn with fire. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord. I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human to animal, and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt! This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord. Throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.”

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

Thanks be to God!

The Singing Response: PSALM 149

EASTER HYMN

Praise the Lord, new songs employ, Alleluia!

Sing to God, who is your joy, Alleluia!

All now sing with one accord, Alleluia!

Lift your voice unto the Lord, Alleluia!

Let your feet be still no more, Alleluia!

Dance your maker to adore, Alleluia!

Strike the timbrel and the lyre, Alleluia!

Your delight is God's desire, Alleluia!

Heirs to grace, now celebrate, Alleluia!

God in righteousness is great, Alleluia!

Justice shall outlast our days, Alleluia!

If we lose ourselves in praise, Alleluia!

The Witness from the Gospels

MATTHEW 18:15-20

If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them!

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon *Congregational Conversation!* 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 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. 392 *Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether* UNION SEMINARY
*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: Woody Chenault

Ushers: Miriam Chenault and Susan Krivichi

***The flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given in honor of
the 35th wedding anniversary of Mark and Kathy Holperin.***

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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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Debbie Brown, Church Administrator

Sharon Breit, Director of Christian Education

Lori Lee Hunter, Director of Music

Norma Yaeger, Pianist

Christine Clough, Cleaning Service

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Safety and Security, Carlton Schroeder

Scholarship, Ursula Charaf

Service Support Team, Joy Turpin

First Congregational United Church of Christ

105 North First Street ~ PO Box 1385 ~ Eagle River, Wisconsin 54521

Website: eagleriverucc.org Church Office: 715-802-8501 Email: office@eagleriverucc.org

Timothy W. Shirley: pastortim@eagleriverucc.org timwshirley@gmail.com



First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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