

# 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.*



Twenty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost  
Thirty First Sunday in Ordinary Time  
A Festival of Thanksgiving

*The Lord's Day  
Twenty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost  
Thirty First Sunday in Ordinary Time  
A Festival of Thanksgiving  
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 we read another of the few parables included by the writer of the Gospel of Matthew. This story offers the reminder that we are called to risk everything entrusted to us by the One who gives us everything! In this parable, those who gamble their talents, investing them in various and unknown ways, unsure of the payoff or that there would even be one, are rewarded with a healthy return. The lazy sloth who hid the one solitary talent belonging to his master, a possession trustworthily placed in this servant's care, buried it in the ground for safe keeping. The fearfully anxiety ridden slave is not only rebuked, but is stripped of all his possessions, leaving him with nothing, save for the outer darkness where he is unceremoniously tossed, destined to the dustbin of history described as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth! Our challenge is to find a relevant word for today as we dare to give thanks for the blessings we presume to be ours. As we cast our bread on the proverbial waters, we look for a relevant message that will inform our contemporary, postmodern, context as we listen for the voice of the holy and still speaking Spirit of God.

### **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

The day of the Lord is here! Gather before the One who is the hope of our salvation!

**This is the time, the season to worship God, giving thanks to the Holy One who comes into our midst when we least expect it!**

As beloved children of light, be awakened to God's presence in this place, the One who fills us with faith and love!

**To the One enthroned in the heavens, we offer ourselves to God on this festival day filled with praise and worship and our humblest thanksgiving!**

Let us worship God!

The Introit, No. 528

*Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart*

Henry Smith

## The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

To the One enthroned in the heavens, we lift up our eyes as your beloved children; we have come into your light this day to worship the One who is the hope of our salvation, to give thanks for all the blessings of this life; God of all gracious gifts, fill us with your faith and love that we might be awakened to your presence to answer the high calling to meet the needs of all your human creation; 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 Hymns, No. 276; 718 *We Gather Together*

KREMSER

The Bringing of First Fruits

*Come, Ye Thankful People, Come* ST. GEORGE'S WINDSOR

## \*The Litany of Praise

In this sacred setting we lift our eyes to the One enthroned in the heavens!

**We look to the Lord our God, the One whose mercy is always upon us!**

The Holy One brings peace to everyone who belongs to God, and that includes all people!

**God has called us beloved, children of light, children of the day! Our souls are more than filled with the abundance of gifts that we count as the blessings of God!**

For God has not destined us for wrath but has clothed us with the breastplate of faith and love!

**The Holy One awakens us to the hope of our salvation through Christ Jesus, the one we call master and Lord! 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 Confession<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes we are objects of scorn and contempt, but other times we find ourselves at ease, filled with pride and thinking ourselves better than others. We regret when we cling to a false sense of peace and security amid rampant injustice and oppression. The day of the Holy One can surprise us like a thief in the night. God's judgment is sure and swift but filled with mercy and grace. 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,

**We are reluctant to face your judgment, all-knowing God, wishing we could avoid its sting. How often we fail to fully invest the talents you have entrusted to us. We would rather hide them and hoard them, retreating into a false sense of security. It is far easier to live in the nighttime of self-protection rather than in the light of full participation as faithful and loving servants. We would rather seek an escape from your wrath by shrinking from life rather than investing ourselves in the tasks to which you call us. Have mercy on us, gracious God. We want to be children of the day, your day, children of the light.**

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

Beloved faith community, hear the good news of Thanksgiving. God has not destined us for wrath but for fullness of life in Christ Jesus, the one in whom we declare we have obtained salvation, the one who enables us to become all that we can be. Continue, then, to build up one another with encouragement and hope. Look to God each day for mercy and assurance and be alert to hear a word from God. Live as children of light.

**Thanks be to God!**

The Hymn of Thanksgiving, No. 715 *Now Thank We All Our God*

NUN DANKET

The Time for the Children

Carol Marshall

The Witness from the Epistles

II CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, "He scatters abroad! He gives to the poor! His righteousness endures forever!" He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies

the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your partnership with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that God has given you. Thanks be to God for God's indescribable gift!

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

**Thanks be to God!**

The Singing Response: PSALM 123

CHRISTMAS

*We lift our eyes to you, O Lord, your throne, earth's canopy!  
As masters hold their servants dear, so, Lord, remember me!  
So, Lord, remember me!*

*More like a child than bonded slave, we claim your grace outright!  
The proud shall fall, but all the meek find favor in your sight!  
Find favor in your sight!*

*Your boundless mercies, Lord, outweigh the scorn we must endure!  
While foes shall fade in their contempt, your love will long endure!  
Your love will long endure!*

The Witness from the Gospels

MATTHEW 25:14-30

“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. At once the one who had received the five talents went off and traded with them and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time, the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents. See, I have made five more talents!’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave! You have been trustworthy in a few things. I will put you in charge of many things! Enter into the joy of your master!’ And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents. See, I have made two more talents!’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave! You have been trustworthy in a few things. I will put you in charge of many things! Enter into the joy of your master!’ Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours!’ But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return, I would have received what was my own with interest. So, take the talent from him and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!’”

The Gospel for today!

**Thanks be to God!**

The Sermon  
The Anthem

*Fear Factor!*  
*Thanksgiving Canon*  
Treble Choir; Connie Pellman, flute

Timothy W. Shirley  
Anna Laura Page

A Stewardship Moment  
The Concerns of the Church  
The Pastoral Prayer  
The Lord's Prayer

Trisha Moore

**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 Blessing of Pledges  
\*The Prayer of Thanksgiving  
\*The Closing Hymn, No. 717  
\*The Procession of the Light  
\*The Benediction and Blessing

*Let All Things Now Living*

ASH GROVE

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: Bill Marshall

Ushers: Susan Krivichi and Carlton Schroeder

***The flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given in thanksgiving for all the gifts of life we count as blessings.***

*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 used in our sanctuary, 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 and Comforter; 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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OF CHRIST

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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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