

# 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.*



*Second Sunday in Lent*

*The Lord's Day  
Second Sunday in Lent  
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**

Lent would be such a kinder and gentler season if it did not include the cross. It would be so much easier to swallow if we could avoid the cross, ignore it altogether because it just gets in the way of everything. No kicks and giggles, no fun and games allowed. In the Gospel of Mark, we are once again forced to ponder the cross and its annoying disturbance, its interruption into the pleasantries of our lives. It is like a bad dose of castor oil, for those of you who remember! The message Jesus shared was all well and good, pleasant discourse, polite speak, until he began talking about the dark side, the deep despair of death and dying. Who wants to go through life with a cross as a constant companion, a larger-than-life ball and chain, the weight of which seems so unnecessarily excessively heavy. Ironically, while strangely worn as jewelry, flashy bling, the cross, in all honesty, might be more compared to a millstone wrapped around our necks. Was it not Jesus who once declared, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light!" What gives?

### **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**

Gather to give praise to God in the great congregation! Glorify the Holy One in the midst of the faithful!

**We have come together as people of the covenant, brought as one before the One who gives us a new name, making us blameless before the Holy!**

Bow down before the God of Abraham and Sarah, worshipping the One who bids us come and follow, the One whose hope extends from generation to generation!

**In this sacred hour our minds are set on all things divine, welcoming the One who longs to bless us and give us everlasting life!**

Let us worship God!

The Introit, No. 134 (*Chalice Praise*); verse one, verse two, verse one

Marty Haugen

*Light of life beyond conceiving, mighty spirit of our Lord,  
Give new strength to our believing, give us faith to live your word!  
Give us faith to live your word!*

*In our call to be a blessing, may we be a blessing true!  
May we live and die confessing Christ as Lord of all we do!  
Christ as Lord of all we do!*

### The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

To the One called almighty and everlasting, we have gathered in the midst of the great congregation to worship God, to give praise and glory to the One who calls each one of us to take up our uniquely personalized cross, bidding us to come and follow; we seek to take our minds off ourselves and our worries this day, even as we focus on divine things in this sacred time and space; visit us with your presence in these fleeting moments together that we might be reminded anew of the everlasting covenant that you have made with your people from generation to generation; 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. 24 *The God of Abraham Praise*

LEONI

\*The Litany of Praise

Praise and glory to the Holy One from those who fear God, all who stand in awe of God, for the Lord neither despises or detests the suffering of those who suffer!

**Praise and glory from the great congregation! Let those who seek God, praise the Lord, for the Holy One never hides from those who cry out to the Lord!**

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord! All the families of the nations shall worship the Holy One!

**Praise and glory to the One who has dominion over all things, ruling over all the nations, for all who sleep in the dust of the earth shall bow down before God!**

Yet the faithful will live for the Lord, proclaiming the deliverance of God to a people yet unborn!

**We will tell of the Lord to future generations, declaring what the Holy has done in our midst. 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>

In this holy season of Lent, when we examine our lives and find our faith tested, we often discover a barrenness within our being. We become aware that our relationship with God seems weak, not because God has turned away from us, but because we have failed to trust or spend time in reflective contemplation, the introspection necessary for our well-being, our spiritual health and happiness. How easy it is to forget to seek divine answers to our daily problems. Let us be honest, accountable to our creator and with one another, in this time of confession. 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 our ancestors, we come to you, confessing that all too frequently, we set our minds on human things. There are so many things to buy, so many things to do. Yet, we are still not satisfied, or so it seems, finding meaning in life that so often seems to elude us. Your ways, in some ways, seem irrelevant and outdated. Your promises appear as the naive hopes and dreams of a former generation. But in our hearts, we sense an eternal design that is for all generations, a way of life more satisfying than we have allowed ourselves to explore or have ever imagined. We confess our need for you.**

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

Beloved faith community, hear the good news of Lent! The face of the Holy One is not hidden from those who truly seek. God does not withhold love from us when we choose to go our own way. When we open our eyes to see God at work and open our ears to hear a word from God, our senses are more alert to the leading where God would direct us. We quickly realize how we have been blessed by an unseen hand, forgiven, and restored to wholeness. God offers us the opportunity to live as those who are in tune with the universe, filled with hope, upheld in love, dwelling in everlasting covenant.

**Thanks be to God!**

### The Time for the Children

Carol Marhsall

### The Witness from the Hebrew Bible

GENESIS 17:1-7, 15-16

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty! Walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram. Your

name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful! I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai. Her name will be Sarah! I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations! Kings of peoples will come from her!"

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

**Thanks be to God!**

The Response: PSALM 22:23-31

AZMON

*We come with praise before the Lord, release us from all strife!  
The poor will feast at tables full and find eternal life!*

*The far-flung corners of the earth shall turn to God and sing!  
And nations of the world shall rise to hail the Lord as King!*

*The mighty on their knees will bow! As mortals, they discern  
that, as from dust God gave them breath, to dust they shall return!*

*Descendants of the coming years who walk the paths well trod  
will sing to children yet unborn the mighty acts of God!*

The Witness from the Gospels

MARK 8:31-38

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him! But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter! "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me! For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it! What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

The Gospel for today!

**Thanks be to God!**

The Sermon *The Crux of the Gospel, a Crucible in the Making!* 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. 344 *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*

ASSAM

\*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, 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: Doug Malinski

Ushers: Mary Lou Congdon and Susan Krivichi

***The flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given by  
Ken Krivichi in honor of Susan's birthday, with much love.***

*The color for the Sundays in Lent is Purple, symbolizing  
the penitential nature of this holy season.*

<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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**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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*Safety and Security, Carlton Schroeder*  
*Scholarship, Ursula Charaf*  
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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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