

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.*



*Fourth Sunday in Lent
Laetare Rejoice*

*The Lord's Day
Fourth Sunday in Lent
Laetare Rejoice
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

The lections chosen for today seem a might harsh for this Refreshment Sunday! After all, this Fourth Sunday in Lent portrays a lighter, more festive mood, as we are now more than halfway through the Lenten discipline. In the book of Numbers, the complaining Israelites are met with poisonous snakes that bite and kill many of their number. God seems to be arbitrarily, playfully vindictive, a retributive and reactionary deity who sends the snakes and then sends a cure in what appears to be blatant passive aggressive behavior, emphasis on aggression. In the Gospel narrative, Jesus claims that he must be lifted up in much the same way that the serpent in the wilderness was lifted. This imagery is certainly an allusion to the cross. These are challenging texts to be handled with care. They stretch us because they present both a wonderful image of divine grace and a God of retribution and vengeance. How about we choose to go with grace? Rejoice! Laetare! O be joyful, First Congregational United Church of Christ!

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

Let the redeemed of God come to the light, giving thanks to the One whose steadfast love endures forever!

From every land, from east and west, from north and south, we have gathered to declare the goodness of our God!

Tell of the wonderful works of God to all humankind! With joyful hearts, come bearing your sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving!

With songs of joy, we have assembled in this sacred setting to be refreshed by the One whose light has come into the world, saving us by the grace of God!

Laetare! Rejoice! O be joyful in the house of the Holy One! 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!*

*Give us eyes to see you clearly, make us children of your light!
Give us hearts to live more nearly as your gospel, shining bright!
As your gospel, shining bright!*

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of the serpent, the seraph, and all creation, on this day of great rejoicing, Laetare all around, we have gathered in this time of worship to rejoice in the Holy, to be joyful in the house of God; we have come to lift up the holy in this sacred setting, to give thanks to you and praise you for your steadfast love and for all your wonderful works to all humankind; we give you thanks for the gift of grace and the light that only comes from you; with songs of joy we declare your great deeds among us; be present with us this day, God of goodness and gloriously loving grace, even as you were with the Israelites in the wilderness in their hour of trouble and distress; 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. 200 *What Wondrous Love Is This*

WONDROUS LOVE

*The Litany of Praise

O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good! The steadfast love of the Holy One endures forever!

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so! Let all who have been gathered from every land declare the salvation of God!

From east and west, from north and south, God redeems all those who are troubled, all who are in distress!

The Lord sends out a healing word, delivering us from certain demise, the devastation of a desolating destruction!

Give thanks to the Lord for the steadfast love of God, giving thanks for all the wonderful works of the Holy One gifted to humankind!

Thanksgiving be unto our God as we tell of the awesome deeds of the Holy One, rejoicing with songs of joy! Rejoice! Laetare! O be joyful in praising God! 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

Our time of penitence before God gives us the opportunity to rid ourselves of the weights we carry, the lingering sense that we have not lived up to our full potential, that we have cheated others, that we are disoriented and mired down in troubles of our own making. Let our individual confessions be gathered up in the confessions of our congregation. In the silence and stillness of our moments together, let us confess before the Holy.

The Silent Confession

The Corporate Confession²

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of health and healing, we make ourselves sick when we consider the poorer choices we often make. Oft times, we are impatient, complaining, and troubled. We love being children of the night because it hides the things we wish to hide, things that are shown on our faces in the light of day. By our self-indulgent habits, we destroy ourselves and deprive others, diminishing our humanity. As a church, we seem to sometimes be content to be dead in our trespasses, for we are afraid to embrace the changes that come with the new life you offer. We cry out to you in our trouble. Save us from our distress and our destruction.

The Anthem

Just As I Am, Lord words, Nancy Price and Don Besig; music, Don Besig
Chancel Choir

The Assurance of Pardon³

Beloved faith community, hear the good news of Lent on this day of Refreshment! On this day of great rejoicing, we are reminded that God loved the world so much that Christ Jesus was sent to show us a better way that leads to eternal life. We are not condemned but we are offered saving grace when we come to the light. Let its warmth melt away our resistance to the love embracing us by a loving God. We are re-created in Christ Jesus that we may do the good that God intends and make that goodness our way of life. Laetare! Rejoice!

Thanks be to God!

The Time for the Children

Joy Turpin

The Witness from the Hebrew Bible

NUMBERS 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom, but the people became discouraged on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food!” Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you! Pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us!” So, Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live!” So, Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole, and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live!

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

Thanks be to God!

The Responsorial Psalm (insert), PSALM 107:1-3, 17-22

Richard Proulx

Ursula Charaf, cantor

The Witness from the Gospels

JOHN 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life! “For God so loved the world that God gave the only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life!” Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God!

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon

Snakes Alive!

Timothy W. Shirley

The Hymn, No. 501

There Is a Balm in Gilead

BALM IN GILEAD

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. 503

O Christ, the Healer

ROCKINGHAM

*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: Ursula Charaf

Ushers: Kamie Kolb and Carlton Schroeder

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

*The color for the Fourth Sunday in Lent is Rose, symbolizing the celebratory nature of the day,
and a reminder that we are more than halfway through the Lenten discipline.*

Reflecting a lighter mood, the liturgical name for this day is Laetare, meaning Rejoice.

Called Mothering Sunday in the United Kingdom, the name Laetare is

taken from the first words of the Latin Entrance Antiphon: Rejoice Jerusalem!

The custom of using Rose paraments and vestments on Refreshment Sunday developed

because the color was used for the blessing of the golden rose by the

Pope on this Sunday in recognition of outstanding service to the Church.

The flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given by

Mark and Kathy Holperin in memory of Joy Holperin.

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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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