

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-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time*

*The Lord's Day
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Twenty-Second 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

The writer of the book of James tells the reader that religion should be pure and undefiled before God! First, the writer tells us that we are to hold our tongues. Okay, we get that suggestion, as challenging, as difficult, as accomplishing that feat always is. Good luck! But then the text goes deeper, giving us some serious insight to consider. Whenever we read about orphans and widows in a biblical text, Hebrew Bible and Christian Scriptures, we are reading hospitality narratives that remind us to take care of those who are vulnerably compromised. To employ a Gospel image, this means to follow Jesus' lead and do for the least of these, brothers and sisters of all stripes. Religion that does not care for the needs of others is worthless, nothing more than a futile exercise in faux spirituality, the equivalence of navel gazing or staring at the moon and the stars for inspiration. Knowing how to be religious really is that simple!

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 before the One who invites us to abide in the tents of the Holy, welcoming us to this holy dwelling to worship the One who anoints us with the oil of gladness!

We have come to this sacred setting, listening for the voice of our beloved, the One who invites us to come away to a quiet place!

Our hearts overflow with the goodly theme of a religion that is pure and undefiled, caring for all people at the heart of our being, guiding everything we seek to do!

As we offer our fragrant gifts of worship before the Holy One, we long to be anointed from above with the steadfast love that endures forever!

Let us worship God!

The Introit, No. 60 (*Chalice Praise*) *I Love You, Lord*

Laurie Klein

The Collect

Let us pray to the Lord,

God of grace and blessing, we have gathered to worship you this day, to listen for your voice in our midst; pour out your grace upon us in this place, God of everlasting blessing; as we sing our praise to you this day, we offer our fragrant gifts of worship; may the faithful expression of our religion that we bring to this time and space be pure and undefiled before you; all this we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the holy and still speaking Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

*The Opening Hymn, No. 288

O God of Vision

LOBE DEN HERREN

*The Litany of Praise

Our hearts overflow with a goodly theme, with verses of adoration and praise addressed to the Holy One!

Our tongues are like the pen of a ready scribe, eager to bring praise before God!

For it is the Lord who hears our song, whose grace is poured out upon us all, the One who has blessed us forever and ever!

God rules with equity and righteousness in the courts of the Lord, anointing us with the oil of gladness, a divine fragrance sent from above!

With stringed instruments, glad offerings we bring before the One whose blessing and grace overflows with abundant generosity toward all creation!

God instills within us the ability to bless, the gift of faith that is pure and undefiled, care and concern for all people at the core of our faith! 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

How easy it is at times for us to notice the sins of others, finding ways to criticize what they do or do not do. How much harder it is to believe that we are also prone to wrong-doing and are in need of repentance. We tend to adopt bad habits that separate us from God and set us against neighbors, especially those who are different from us. Let us seek forgiveness. In the sacred 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 blessing and righteousness, we admit that all is not well with us. We are easily angered and slow to forgive. We speak without listening and pretend to listen without really hearing. Our tongues become weapons rather than instruments of healing. We are more critical than helpful toward the poor in our midst. Turn us around so we can accept your forgiveness and learn to love and forgive ourselves and our neighbors.

The Assurance of Pardon³

Hear the good news! God frees us from our human bondage to live by commandments that build up rather than destroy. God offers us boundaries that liberate us from licentiousness, greed, and false pride. Our creator draws us close that our hearts may find their true home. Praise God for the grace that saves us from ourselves and lifts us up to bear good fruit.

Thanks be to God!

The Time for the Children

Trisha Moore

The Witness from the Epistles

JAMES 1:17-27

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose, God gave birth to us by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures. You must understand this, my beloved brothers and sisters: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, for human anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore, rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. But be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror. For they look at themselves and, ongoing away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing. If any think they are religious and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

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

Thanks be to God!

*How our hearts with joy abound, with your beauty all around!
Words are feeble to express your great love and righteousness!*

*Fairer still than human frame, ever to our eyes the same!
Steadfast love shines from your face! From your lips flow words of grace!*

*Yours the scepter, yours the throne, you to us are God alone!
Vast the mercies to us giv'n: wealth of earth and joy of heav'n!*

The Witness from the Gospels

MARK 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders, and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash, and there are also many other traditions that they observe: the washing of cups and pots and bronze kettles and beds.) So, the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders but eat with defiled hands?" He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines!' "You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition!" When he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile!" For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come! Sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, folly! All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person!"

The Gospel for today!

Thanks be to God!

The Sermon

Pure Religion, Undefined?

Timothy W. Shirley

The Solo

Dear Me

Nichole Nordeman; arr. Ed Kerr

Jill Bierwirth, soprano

The Service of Holy Communion

*Individually wrapped gluten-free bread is
available in the center bowl of each bread plate.*

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 (insert)

All Are Welcome

TWO OAKS

*The Extinguishing of the Altar Candles

*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, 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: Susan Krivichi 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 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 counted backwards from the Reign of Christ and emphasizes personal faith development and nurture, and the growth and enhancement of the Church and the churches.

The flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given in memory of the 65th anniversary of Kathy Craffey's parents. Kathy's mom was told by her sister in 1959 that she should have pastel bouquets at her wedding to match the bridesmaid's dresses. She did so begrudgingly, though she wanted red. Diane, you are finally getting your red roses. Happy Anniversary. Your daughter, Kathy!

*Additional flowers adorning the Chancel for worship today are given in honor of
Susan and Ken Krivichi's 35th anniversary.*

¹⁻³ Reprinted by permission United Church Press from *Led by Love: Worship Resources for Year B*, by Lavon Bayler. Copyright 1996 by United Church Press.

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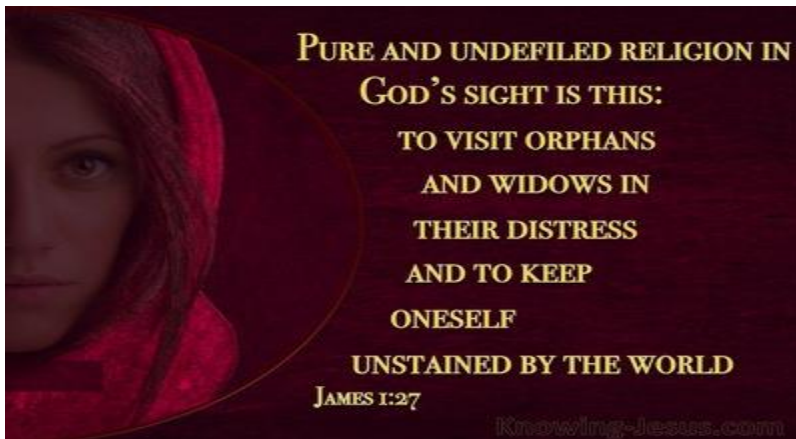
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Christine Clough, Cleaning Service



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First Congregational UCC - Eagle River, WI

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