

**Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ**  
**Third Sunday of Lent**  
**March 23, 2025**

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\*\*\*\* *Some rise to their feet, some rise in their hearts—please rise as you are able.*

GATHERING BELL

*At the sound of the bell, please silence yourselves and prepare for worship.*

PRELUDE

*Come, Thou Fount*, arr Marianne Kim

Martha Jones

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Paul Ashby

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

**Whoever you are...and wherever you are on life's journey...  
you are welcome here!**

OPENING REFLECTION

CALL TO WORSHIP (Inspired by the books of Rabbi Harold Kushner)

Carolyn Holmgren

God does not cause our misfortunes,

**Some bad things are caused by bad luck.**

Some bad things are caused by bad people.

**Some bad things are caused by nature.**

Some bad things are made far worse by climate change.

**Some bad things happen because people are selfish or blind to the pain and suffering of others.**

Some bad things are simply an inevitable consequence of our being human and being mortal.

**Some bad things occur as simply part of the admission ticket to this concert we call life on planet earth.**

\*\*\*\*HYMN

*Come, O Fount of Every Blessing*

NCH 459, vs 1 & 3

Come, O fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing your grace.

streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of endless praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.

Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it, mount of God's unfailing love.

O to grace how great a debtor daily I am drawn anew!

Let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to you.

Prone to wander, I can feel it, wander from the love I've known;

Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for your very own.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Paul

MISSION MOMENT

Anna Stout, Foundation for Cultural Exchange

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Respond to each shared prayer request with "Peace, Shalom, Salaam."

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your 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 yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Carolyn

OFFERTORY

*He Shall Feed His Flock*, Joseph Martin

\*\*\*\*DOXOLOGY (tune: *Old Hundredth*)

**Praise God who calls all humankind;  
Praise Christ for loving ties that bind;  
Praise Spirit making all things new;  
One Love, One God, we honor you!**

\*\*\*\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Carolyn

**Holy One, we are thankful for the many good things in our life that are a mere accident of birth. We live in a place of beauty, we have access to food, water, shelter and medicine. We often have experienced care from friends or family members. Most of us have not suffered from starvation, military invasion, or needed to flee to another nation to survive. Let us find peace and grace with a heart of joyful sharing. Amen**

\*\*\*\*HYMN NCH #547, vs 1-4

*Amazing Grace*

All

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;  
how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;  
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

My God has promised good to me, whose word my hope secures;  
God will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 13:1-9

Carolyn

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did."

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the man working the vineyard, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.' "

MESSAGE

*"The Cost of Admission for Life on Planet Earth"*

Paul

\*\*\*\*HYMN NCH 82, VS 1 & 2

*Go, My Children, With My Blessing*

All

Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone;  
waking, sleeping, I am with you, you are my own.  
In my love's baptismal river I have made you mine forever.  
Go, my children, with my blessing, you are my own.

Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;  
grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.

Here my Spirit's power filled you, here with tender comfort stilled you.  
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.

\*\*\*\*BENEDICTION

Paul

\*\*\*\*SUNG BENEDICTION

*World Peace Prayer*

All

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,  
From despair to hope, from fear to trust.  
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace,  
Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,  
Let peace fill our universe!

GREETING ONE ANOTHER IN THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

RECESSIONAL

*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, arr. John Carter

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### **Today's Worship Leaders**

preacher  
liturgist  
musicians

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby  
Carolyn Holmgren  
Karen Caton, Martha Jones, Chancel Choir

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### **Hymn Notes**

During Lent, all of the hymns used in our worship will come from the Lenten Devotional, *Lift Up Your Voice*. Copies of the devotional are available in the gathering space, along with a song sheet you may take home. From the devotional: "... each week, biblical texts and beloved songs ... inspire practices you can try at home. As the days lengthen, the birds will sing – and so will we, strengthening our spirits, praying twice, and joining in with creation's symphony of sorrow and joy, anguish and comfort, death and new life."

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