

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Seventh Sunday After Epiphany
February 23, 2025

**** *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 *I've Got Peace Like a River with Standin' in the Need of Prayer*, Mary McDonald

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 (from the Dhammapada, teachings of Buddha)

Joanne Drake

Let go of your rage.

Let go of your pride.

When you are not attached to things or outcomes you can free yourself of sorrow.

Anger and rage are like a chariot out of control.

Only those who curb their anger can be a true driver of the chariot.

Those with anger merely hold on to the reins.

With gentleness, overcome your rage.

With gentleness, speak the truth. Live a life of generosity.

****HYMN NCH 23

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

All

There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea.

There's a kindness in God's justice, which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than in God's heaven.

There is no place where earthly failings have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader than the measures of the mind.

And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more faithful, we would gladly trust God's word,

and our lives would show thanksgiving for the goodness of our God.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Paul

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

Joanne

OFFERTORY

Common Ground, Audrey Snyder

Choir

***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

Joanne

God of all peace, on the bumpy paths of life we often get upset. Bad drivers cause us to react, needing to press eight buttons to get a service call with a human tests our patience, inflation and selfish politicians discourage us. In each day grant us gifts of peace, shine the light of understanding and joy so that we can be healed. Bless us with gifts of kindness on our most grumpy days. AMEN

**HYMN NCH 170

Your Ways Are Not Our Own

All

Your ways are not our own, O gracious God most high,
Yet we would follow in your paths and on your love rely.

Christ teaches us to bless the ones who curse and harm,
To turn the other cheek when struck, attackers to disarm.

Yet, we cannot excuse abuse in any form,
For all are children of your care, and love must be our norm.

How shall we show your love, your pardon to believe?
You bid us share as we are blessed and give as we receive.

Forgiveness is our joy, receiving, giving, too.
Keep us from judgments hard and cruel, that we may dwell with you.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 6: 27-36, Ephesians 4:22-26

Joanne

“But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, who is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as Abba is merciful.

You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

MESSAGE

“The Choice Between Anger and Mercy”

Paul

****HYMN NCH #2

Glory, Glory Hallelujah

All

Glory, glory hallelujah, since I laid my burdens down. (*repeat*)
I feel better, so much better, since I laid my burdens down. (*repeat*)
Feel like shouting "Hallelujah!" since I laid my burdens down. (*repeat*)

****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

Glory, Gloria, Hallelujah, arr Joyce Finch Johnson

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musicians

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Joanne Drake
Karen Caton, Martha Jones, Chancel Choir

Acknowledgements

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