

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Third Sunday After Epiphany
January 26, 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

Gift of Love, arr Hal Hopson

Martha Jones

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Alan Morris

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

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

OPENING REFLECTION

CALL TO WORSHIP

Joanne Drake

We cannot enjoy the spirituality that truly is of God unless we are enjoying the struggle for justice—love, compassion, healing, nonviolence, and forgiveness in the world. And we cannot stay in the struggle unless we are drawing personal strength through relationship with God whom JESUS loved; however, we may experience and image this sacred power by Loving what She Loves...by:

Liberating oppressed peoples and creatures—

Grant us your compassion that we may be courageous in loosing the chains of your little ones...

Healing personal wounds, ours and the wounds of others—

Help us to be fearless in confronting and healing the darkness within ourselves so that we may be healers...

Liberating us from fear, greed, and lack of confidence—

Set us free from the fear of what we do not yet know and experience...

And so, by Loving what She Loves, healing peoples, nations, tribes, and our fragile earth home—
It all is one in God.

****HYMN NCH #4, vs 1-3

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You

All

Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, God of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before you, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the storms of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.

All your works with joy surround you, earth and heaven reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain, teach us what our praise should be.

You are giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed,
Wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Loving Spirit, Father, Mother, all who love belong to you;
teach us how to love each other, by that love our joy renew.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Marie Koontz

MISSION MOMENT

Carla Haas, Sleep in Heavenly Peace

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 *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*, arr. Joel Raney Handbell Ensemble and Martha

****DOXOLOGY (tune: *Tallis Canon*)

**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

Gracious God, we thank you for the invitation to grow through giving, made possible by Your outpouring spirit. May these gifts we bring be used to form ever-new blessings in this congregation and around the world. And may our lives be the instruments of love and joy you desire. Amen.

HYMN SONG FOLDER #13

Here I Am, Lord

All

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

Refrain

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send? *Refrain*

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send? *Refrain*

SCRIPTURE

A reading from 1 John 4:7-8

Joanne

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

A reading from Matthew's Gospel, chapter 25

"He will put the righteous people at his right and the others at his left. Then the King will say to the people on his right, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed

me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.' The righteous will then answer him, 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!'"

MESSAGE

"The One Important Thing"

Alan

****HYMN

Great God of Earth and Heaven (Aurelia)

All

Great God of earth and heaven whose Spirit is our breath,
at Christmastime born human, at Easter shared our death:
all generous, all loving, in whom all beauty thrives—
forgive your sons and daughters the comfort of our lives!

While refugees go homeless and die before they live,
while children have no future—our apathy forgive!
Where hope fades to depression, despair erodes the soul,
restore in us a passion to make the broken whole.

Where hunger kills your people, injustice cries aloud,
while weapons grow more lethal and only power stands proud—
God of our flesh and fiber, whose mercy does not cease,
implant your mind within us, create a world for peace.

****BENEDICTION

Alan

****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

Aurelia, arr Chuck Marohnic

Martha

Acknowledgements

Call to Worship, gleaned portions from Carter Heyward, 'Saving Jesus from Those Who Are Right: Rethinking What It Means to Be Christian' (Fortress Press, 1999), 36–37. Edited by Chaplain Alan.

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