

**Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ**  
**Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost**  
**September 10, 2023**

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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**

*Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day, arr John Leavitt*

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**

Joanne Drake

Holy One, awaken us to the beauty of creation.

**We lift our eyes to the beauty and wonder of nature.**

Remind us of the goodness of this life sustaining planet.

**Move us to preserve the earth for future generations.**

We lift our hearts in praise for our many neighbors in creation – trees, well carved mountains, rivers, oceans, animals and people.

**We offer our praise for the goodness of life.**

Holy One, let our hearts flow with the wellspring of love.

**We seek the love that flows for eternity.**

**HYMN**

*When the Gifts of God Surprise Us (tune: Holy Manna)*

All

When the gifts of God surprise us and our joy must find a voice,  
when the earth is brimmed with glory and compels us to rejoice:  
sing for beauty in abundance, sing for mysteries we share  
sing for marvels that revive us, sing for wonder ev'rywhere.

When relationships are broken and no call for peace is heard,  
when our differences define us, and division seems assured:  
sing to join our scattered voices, sing to name how we agree.  
Sing to bridge all that divides us. Sing to form community.

When injustice grows around us and the truth gives way to lies,  
when the violent build an empire and the strong suppress the wise:  
sing down jails of hate that cage us. Sing down idols we hold dear.  
Sing down strongholds of oppression. Sing down fortresses of fear.

When the love of God defines us and relationships are healed,  
when injustice is defeated and the reign of Christ revealed:  
sing with breath the Spirit give us. Sing for justice that will be.  
Sing down praise through endless ages. Sing for grace that sets us free.

**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

*Come Build a Church*, Ken Medema

Choir and Congregation

Come build a church with soul and spirit, come build a church of flesh and bone.  
We need no tower rising skyward, no house of wood or glass or stone.  
Come build a church with human frailty. Come build a church of flesh and blood.  
Jesus shall be its sure foundation. It shall be built by the hand of God.

\*\*DOXOLOGY

*Know That God is Good*

All

**Know that God is good. Know that God is good.  
Know that God is good. God is good. God is good.**

**Hal-le, hal-le-lu-jah. Hal-le, hal-le-lu-jah.  
Hal-le, hal-le-lu-jah. Hal-le-lu-jah. Hal-le-lu-jah.**

\*\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Joanne

**Holy One, we have much to grumble about. The news reminds us of floods, fires, earthquakes and heat domes. The news announces inflation, indictments, and threats to democracy. Grant us the courage to change what we can change. Grant us the acceptance we need to find inner peace. And bless us with daily joys that add a heart of praise to even hard days. Amen**

\*\*HYMN NCH #287

*Come, Teach Us, Spirit of Our God*

All

Come, teach us, Spirit of our God, the language of your way,  
the lessons that we need to live, the faith for every day;  
the faith for every day.

Excite our minds to follow you, to trace new truths in store,  
new flight paths for our spirit space, new marvels to explore;  
new marvels to explore.

Engage our wits to dance with you, to leap from logic's base,  
to capture insight on the wing, to sense your cosmic grace;  
to sense your cosmic grace.

Inspire our spark to light from you to catch creation's flair,  
new artistry to celebrate, new harmonies to dare;  
new harmonies to dare.

Delight our hearts to worship you, to learn compassion's code,  
to live in context of your love, great teacher who is God!  
Great teacher who is God!

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 149 & Acts 2:42-47

Joanne

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful.  
Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.  
Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.  
For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory.  
Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches.

Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron, to execute on them the judgment decreed. This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the Lord!

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They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

MESSAGE *"Adding Some Praise to Life"* Paul  
\*\*HYMN Song Folder #15 *Let All Things Now Living* All

Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving  
to God the Creator triumphantly raise,  
who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us,  
who guides us and leads to the end of our days.  
God's banners fly o'er us; God's light goes before us,  
a pillar of fire shining forth in the night,  
till shadows have vanished and darkness is banished,  
as forward we travel from light into light.

The law God enforces, the stars in their courses  
and sun in its orbit obediently shine;  
the hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,  
the deeps of the ocean proclaim the Divine.  
We, too, should be voicing our love and rejoicing;  
with glad adoration a song let us raise,  
till all things now living unite in thanksgiving:  
to God in the highest hosanna and praise!

\*\*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

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preacher  
liturgist  
musician

**Today's Worship Leaders**

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby  
Joanne Drake  
Martha Jones

## **Acknowledgements**

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