

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 7, 2023

*** 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

Prelude In G Major, Bach

Max Reilly

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

Ken Puhler

Life has so many loose ends.

And the end often comes too soon.

Would we truly reach all our goals and dreams if we lived to be 150 and were still healthy?

**There is no end to goals and dreams that flow through our heart – mind – spirit –
consciousness.**

The hope of the gospels is the hope that death is a door and not a wall.

**From the dawn of history, humans in every culture and faith group have viewed death as
a place of beginnings.**

May we find this hope in the stories of rebirth and resurrection.

May we live in the hope that is eternal.

****HYMN NCH 433**

In the Bulb There is a Flower

All

In the bulb there is a flower; the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There's a dawn for every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

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

Ken

OFFERTORY

We Are Many Parts, Marty Haugen

Choir

**DOXOLOGY (tune: *Lasst uns erfreuen*)

All

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below. Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Ken

Creator God, use our gifts and offerings to sow the seeds of hope. In the most difficult days, grant us a glimpse of the wonder of creation. During months that test our strength, bless us with a vision of the “Big Picture” of life so that we focus on what is truly important. And if we face hard years, let it be with the radiance of the light of eternity shining with us. Amen

HYMN NCH 297

Give Thanks for Life

All

Give thanks for life, the measure of our days,
mortal, we pass through beauty that decays,
Yet sing to God our hope, our love, our praise, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Give thanks for those who made their life a light
caught from the Christ-flame, bursting through the night,
Who touched the truth, who burned for what was right, Alleluia, Alleluia!

And for our own, our living and our dead,
thanks for the love by which our life is fed,
A love not changed by time or death or dread, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Give thanks for hope, that like the wheat, the grain
that lies in darkness does its life retain
in resurrection to grow green again, Alleluia, Alleluia!

SCRIPTURE

John 14:1-11

Ken

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

MESSAGE

“The Ultimate Mystery – What Is Beyond Life?”

Paul

**HYMN NCH 25

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

All

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home:

Under the shadow of your throne your saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is your arm alone, and our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood, or earth received its frame,
from everlasting you are God, to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in your sight are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream, soon bears us all away;
we fly forgotten, as a dream fades at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come:
Still be our God while troubles last, and our eternal home.

**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!

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musician

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Ken Puhler
Max Reilly

Acknowledgements

Unless otherwise noted, music reprinted and/or streamed with permission. OneLicense #A-709231. All rights reserved.

- ◇ *Prelude, Prelude In G Major*, Bach. Public Domain.
- ◇ *In the Bulb There is a Flower*. Tune: *Promise*. Tune and text: Natalie Sleeth © 1986, Hope Publishing.
- ◇ *We Are Many Parts*. English words & Tune: Marty Haugen, b.1950 © 1980, 1986, tr. 2005, GIA Publications, Inc.
- ◇ *Doxology*. Tune: *Lasst uns erfreuen*, Germany, 1623. Arr. Mark Hayes © 2008, Lorenz Publishing Co.
- ◇ *Give Thanks for Life*, NCH 297. Tune: *Robinson*, by Nancy M. René © 1994. Permission obtained from composer. Text: Shirley Erena Murray © 1987, Hope Publishing Company.**
- ◇ *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*. Tune: *St. Anne*, William Croft, 1708, Text: Isaac Watts, 1719, alt. Public domain.
- ◇ *Lead Us from Death to Life (World Peace Prayer)*. Words of refrain by Satish Kumar. Tune by Marty Haugen © 1985 GIA Publications, Inc.

**In personally granting us permission to include the tune *Robinson* in a recording of our service, composer Nancy René wrote: “My grandmother, Georgia Robinson, was a policewoman in Los Angeles. She was blinded on duty but continued to work in the community.”