

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Pluralism Sunday | Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 3, 2026

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

OPENING BELL

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

PRELUDE

Holy Manna, arr. Chuck Marohnic

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

Sandra Holloway

Our minds delight in creating categories of classifications and division. It is an endless game of this and that.

But we pray for the spiritual freedom to be released from divisions created to foment hatred and violence.

We are told by leaders this is a Christian nation and excluding all Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Taoists, Jains, Sikhs and those who practice no faith.

We are told by leaders we want immigrants from places like Norway and whites-only from South Africa.

Black - white, Jew - Gentile, and Christian – Muslim beware the divisions created to generate fear and hatred.

May the love of Jesus that broke through all categories to see the good in despised Samaritans inspire our hearts to see the image of God in others.

****HYMN

We Are a Rainbow (see insert)

All

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Paul

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.

SIXTY SECONDS FOR PERSONAL PRAYERS/SILENT CONTEMPLATION

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Sandra

OFFERTORY

Forever God's Love Endures, Pepper Choplin

Choir

****DOXOLOGY

Hal-le, hal-le hal-le-lu-ja.

All

****PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Sandra

God of this global community we call earth; we celebrate an earth without corners. We honor the circle of life that embraces all people. Help us to see all global religions have the capacity to create goodness. Make our hearts a home for understanding, for welcome, for sharing the gifts of this beautiful circle of life we call earth.

SCRIPTURE

Colossians 3:12-14; Acts 17:21-28 (NRSVUE)

Sandra

Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

+++++

Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said,

‘For we, too, are his offspring.’”

READING OF THE GLOBAL GOLDEN RULE

Paul

MESSAGE

“Finding God’s Love Within Us”

HYMN (Please remain seated.)

At the Table, All Are Equal (tune: Holy Manna)

All

At the table, all are equal, all approach the feast as guest.
None sit in the seat of honor; at the table, none are best.
At the table, none go hungry, none must steal or beg for bread;
all receive from God’s abundance: at the table, all are fed.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Gluten free options are available.)

Paul

All are welcome who practice the way of compassion.

****HYMN

At the Table, All Are Equal

All

At the table, all are cherished, all are sought at any cost,
none abandoned or forsaken, at the table, none are lost.
At the table, none are finished, none sit selfishly content;
all are called to love in service: from the table, all are sent.

****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

Reprise of 'We Are a Rainbow'

Martha

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musicians

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Sandra Holloway
Martha Jones

Acknowledgements

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- ◇ *Lead Us from Death to Life (World Peace Prayer)*. Words of refrain by Satish Kumar. Tune by Marty Haugen © 1985 GIA Publications, Inc.

* Hymnwriter and Assistant Professor of Worship at North Park Theological Seminary, David Bjorlin, says of this song: "One of the aspects of worship I am particularly interested in is the way worship forms our ethics. This text explores the ethical implications of Christ's table and how it should change the way we inhabit our world."

Pastoral Care

Let Paul know if you want to bring a sandwich and have lunch | This is an ongoing opportunity to discuss with Paul any joy or concern in depth, or anything in the news that weighs on you. **Paul is available Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to 1 pm each week, or Saturday if you work during the week, or by appointment.** Paul's email is revpaulashby@yahoo.com. To call Pastor Paul:

- His cell phone, 970-793-8638.
- His extension at church, 970-242-0298, x104.
- Home landline, 970-200-2668. [Paul is always up until midnight, do not be shy about calling late when there is need.]