

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Seventh Sunday After Pentecost
July 7, 2024

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

PRELUDE *Fantasy on 'Holy Manna', arr John Carter* Martha Jones

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

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 Betsy McLoughlin

Each day we live and breathe with a heart of trust.

We daily trust our friends and those in our circle of love.

We often trust cars to run, we trust nurses and doctors to help, we trust church members to share our joys and concerns.

We often trust our strength, our experience, our willpower.

We often trust a vast assortment of machines to work from computers to ATM's. When they fail us, we feel the urge to hit them with blunt objects.

We trust in the stability of the planets, the sun, the atmosphere and gravity. Life is sustained day after day.

Most of the time we do not even think about all the things we trust day to day.

Let our trust be blessed with trustworthy things and people.

**HYMN *God is Here, As We Your People* All

God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace:
Here are table, font, and pulpit, here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching, here in silence as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold;
here as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.
Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living to believe and to adore.

Sovereign God, of earth and heaven, in an age of change and doubt
keep us faithful to the gospel, help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;
we, who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!

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

Betsy

SUNG OFFERTORY NCH #398

All

During the collection of the offering, we will sing this beautiful hymn from the New Century Hymnal, #398. As you sing, reflect on the words by composer Dan Damon, who says that one of the goals of his work is "to keep things simple and singable while at the same time exploring the edges of our spoken and sung faith."

**OFFERING RESPONSE (tune: *Holy Manna*)

All

**Lend your joy to all our giving, let it light our pilgrim way;
from the night of anxious keeping, loose us into generous day.
Open wide our hands in sharing as we heed Christ's ageless call,
healing, teaching, and reclaiming, honoring you by loving all.**

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Betsy

Holy One, we are not here for ourselves alone. Help us to realize how our actions and inactions impact the health of our souls, our relationships, our living earth. In this era of global warming let us hope not for warmer winters but for life-giving places for all our brothers and sisters. Amen

SCRIPTURE

Acts 17:22-29

Betsy

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious 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 Holy One who made the world and everything in it, who is Ruler of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is served by human hands, as though The Divine needed anything, since The Divine gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor, God made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and 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 grope for God and find God—though indeed the Holy One is not far from each one of us. For 'In God we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are God's offspring.' Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals.

MESSAGE

"Can We Trust that God Exists?"

Paul

**HYMN NCH 11, vs 1-5

Bring Many Names

All

Bring many names, beautiful and good, celebrate, in parable and story,
holiness in glory, living, loving God. Hail and Hosanna! Bring many names!

Strong mother God, working night and day, planning all the wonders of creation,
setting each equation, genius at play: Hail and Hosanna, strong mother God!

Warm father God, hugging every child, feeling all the strains of human living,
caring and forgiving till we're reconciled: Hail and Hosanna, warm father God!

Old, aching God, grey with endless care, calmly piercing evil's new disguises,
glad of good surprises, wiser than despair: Hail and Hosanna, old, aching God!

Young, growing God, eager, on the move, saying no to falsehood and unkindness,
crying out for justice, giving all you have: Hail and Hosanna, young, growing God!

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

All who practice the way of compassion are welcome.

Paul

**HYMN NCH 11, vs 6

Bring Many Names

All

Great, living God, never fully known, joyful darkness far beyond our seeing,
closer yet than breathing, everlasting home: Hail and Hosanna, great, living God!

**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 *O God, Beyond All Praising (Thaxted)*, arr Mark Hayes

Martha

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musician

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Betsy McLoughlin
Martha Jones

Acknowledgements

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