

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Fourth Sunday After Epiphany
February 2, 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

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light, arr. Wayne Wold

Shannon 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

Michael Petri

If I have the voice of an angel but speak without compassion it will only be a bunch of noise that does not help the church.

If I have all the answers and the faith to build a megachurch but lack any sense of empathy, I have gained nothing in the heart of God.

If I give everything I own to the poor, but do it for fame and awards without any sense of mercy, what have I gained?

Love is patient, kind, not corrupted by envy, pride or blind arrogance that never admits mistakes.

Where God is present you see faith, hope and love flowing through the church.

Remember that the greatest of these is love.

**** HYMN, Song Folder #2, vs 1,4,5

All Are Welcome

All

Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hope and dreams and vision, rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

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

Michael

OFFERTORY

As the Grains of Wheat, Haugen, Haas

Choir

****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

Michael

God of love, open our hearts to embody the way of Jesus. Allow us the vision to see the light of the divine in others. Let us hear the songs of kindness and mercy that create a new earth. Inspire us to be agents of peace and justice in a world where war and injustice sustain the profits of the powerful. Teach us a better way. AMEN

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 13, Galatians 3:26-29

Michael

If I speak in the tongues of humans and of angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions and if I hand over my body so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable; it keeps no record of wrongs; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part, but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love.

In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

MESSAGE

"Why This Scripture is Not About Your Wedding"

Paul

****HYMN Song Folder #34

The Gift of Love

All

Though I may speak with bravest fire, and have the gift to all inspire,
and have not love, my words are vain, as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess, and striving so my love profess,
but not be giv'n by love within the profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control, our spirits long to be made whole,
let inward love guide ev'ry deed, by this we wor-ship, and are freed.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

All are welcome who practice the way of compassion.

Let Us Break Bread Together (African American, arr Ronald A. Nelson)

Paul

Shannon

****HYMN NCH 448

Take My Life, God, Let It Be

All

Take my life, God, let it be consecrated faithfully
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my spirit, let it move at the impulse of your love.
Take my intellect and use all its powers as you choose.

Take my will; your will be done! May your will and mine be one.
Take my heart, and by your grace make of it your dwelling place.

Take my love and help it grow; let my loving overflow.
Take me now, and help me be part of Christ's community.

****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 *We Are Marching in the Light of God (Siyahamba – South African)*
arr. Robert Buckley Farlee

Shannon

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musicians

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Michael Petri
Shannon Jones, Karen Caton, Chancel Choir

Acknowledgements

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