

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Evolution Sunday
February 4, 2024

*** 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* (Houston) ... 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 Paul

CALL TO WORSHIP Martha Jones

Too often we want to limit God to our culture, our religion, our images, our measurements.

Let us embrace the awe of creation with the celebration that something exists rather than nothing.

We reject the small-minded view that creation was completed in six days of earth time.

Of the trillion of planets and millions of solar systems how can the Creativity of the Creator be confined to mere calendar days on one tiny planet.

The Genesis story is one that honors the goodness in each aspect of creation.

May we discover the goodness and God-ness of the evolution of life that makes our very life, breath and heartbeat a part of the story of evolution. Amen.

****HYMN NCH #567, vv. 1-4** *Stars and Planets Flung in Orbit* All

Stars and planets flung in orbit, galaxies that swirl through space,
powers hid within the atom, cells that form an infant's face
these, O God, in silence praise you; by your wisdom they are made.

Skies adorned with sunset splendor, silent peaks in calm repose,
golden fields awaiting harvest, foaming surf and fragrant rose:
earth, its bounty clothed with beauty, echoes all creation's praise.

Life in wondrous, wild profusion, seed and fruit, each flower and tree,
beast and fish and swarming insect, soaring bird, rejoicing, free:
these, your creatures, join in chorus, praising you in wordless song.

Humankind, earth's deepest mystery, born of dust but touched by grace,
torn apart by tongue and color, yet a single, striving race:
we, in whom you trace your image, add our words to nature's song.

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

Martha

OFFERTORY

Let Your Light Shine . . . Mary McDonald

Choir

****DOXOLOGY, NCH #567, vs. 5 *Stars and Planets Flung in Orbit*
Gracious God, we bring before you gifts of human life alone,
truth that throbs through song and story, visions caught in paint and stone;
these, O God, we gladly offer, gifts to praise the Giver's name.**

****PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

All

God of evolution, we are thankful for this life-giving earth. Help us to preserve this gift for the generations yet to be born. Enable us to open our hearts wide enough to fall in love with this beautiful work of art we label – creation. AMEN

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:1-31

Martha

***See Insert

MESSAGE

"Since the Beginning – Every Day is Evolution!"

Paul

****HYMN NCH #563**

We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky

All

We cannot own the sunlit sky, the moon, the wildflowers growing,
for we are part of all that is within life's river flowing,
With o-pen hands receive and share the gift of God's creation,
that all may have abundant life in every earthly nation.

When bodies shiver in the night and, weary, wait for morning,
when children have no bread but tears, and war horns sound their warning,
God calls humanity to wake, to join in common labor,
that all may have abundant life in oneness with their neighbor.

God calls humanity to join as partners in creating
a future free from want or fear, life's goodness celebrating.
That new world beacons from afar, invites our shared endeavor,
that all may have abundant life and peace endure forever.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

Paul

All who practice the way of compassion are welcome.

****HYMN**

Restless Weaver (tune: Beach Spring)

All

Restless Weaver, ever spinning threads of justice and shalom;
dreaming patterns of creation where all creatures find a home;
gathering up life's varied fibers ~ every texture, every hue:
grant us your creative vision.
with us weave your world anew.

Where earth's fragile web's unraveling help us mend each broken strand.
Bless our urgent, bold endeavors cleansing water, air and land.
Through the Spirit's inspiration
offering health where once was pain,
strengthen us to be the stewards of your world knit whole again.

Restless Weaver, still conceiving new life ~ now and yet to be ~
binding all your vast creation in one living tapestry:
you have called us to be weavers. Let your love guide all we do.

With your reign of peace our pattern,
we will weave your world anew.

**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 *Siyahamba (We Are Marching in the Light of God)*, arr Robert Farlee

Shannon

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Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musician

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Martha Jones
Shannon Jones