

**Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ**  
**Sixth Sunday After Epiphany**  
**February 16, 2025**

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\*\*\*\* *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     *Jesus Is a Rock in a Weary Land (African American)*, arr. Ronald A. Nelson

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

Ellen

We live in a culture that celebrates billionaires, media stars and the powerful. Yet Jesus said blessed are the poor, the hungry, those who struggle and those who are hated.

**But aren't billionaires smarter and better than everyone else? Don't they deserve to be President and fill all the cabinet positions? Surely, they are blessed.**

The music stars fill our stadiums and their message is on the lips of billions of fans. Are they not the most blessed people on earth?

**The powerful promise to punish the enemies of the people and solve all of our problems. Do they not deserve our faith, hope and love?**

Maybe Jesus has it all wrong. Perhaps he should have noticed the blessings of billionaires, music stars and the powerful.

**But do the billionaires, media stars and powerful seem to live only happy lives, with long-term relationships and inner peace? Could the tabloids be revealing a deeper truth?**

\*\*HYMN NCH 6, vs 1-2, 5     *Sing Praise to God, Our Highest Good*

All

Sing praise to God, our highest good profound respect expressing.  
God gives us health, life, livelihood, with every needed blessing.  
To God, who wondrous works performs, creating life and calming storms,  
to God give praise and glory.

Creation thanks you, Holy One: you made us and renew us.  
Delighted at what you have done, you show your greatness through us.  
So may all living things proclaim the wonders of their Maker's name:  
to God give praise and glory.

Forever with us, God is here, nor ever will desert us.  
So, dearly loved, we shall not fear, there's nothing that can hurt us.  
We place our trust in God's command, who leads us with a mother's hand:  
to God give praise and glory!

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

Ellen

OFFERTORY

*God, Grant Me to Be Silent*, Mark Hill

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

Ellen

**God of all people, let our gifts create a more caring church, a more loving community, a more compassionate world. Mold our hearts to reflect the courage and wisdom of the heart of Christ. AMEN**

\*\*\*\*HYMN 180

*Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit*

All

Blessed are the poor in spirit: heaven will someday be theirs.  
Blest are the mourning children: comfort comes from One who cares.  
Blessed the meek and patient, having courage to hang on.  
Soon all earth they will inherit, times of trials will be gone.

Blessed all who thirst or hunger: righteously they will be fed.  
Those who respond with mercy will see mercy up ahead.  
Blessed the clean in spirit---beautiful the pure in heart;  
One day they will see their Maker, nevermore to live apart.

Each seeking peace and justice shall be known as God's own heir.  
Blessed, too, are those ill-treated for what's good and right and fair.  
Blessed the New Creation, joy beyond what we conceive.  
Blessed all those who trust the promise: without seeing, they believe!

SCRIPTURE

Luke 6:20-28

Ellen

Then Jesus looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

“Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

“Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

“But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you.”

MESSAGE

“The Second Set of Beatitudes”

Paul

\*\*\*HYMN

*Not the Powerful, Not the Privileged* (tune: *Stuttgart*)

All



1. Not the pow'r-ful, not the priv'-leged, not the fa-mous in the land,  
2. Not a well-es-tab-lished fam-'ly with an heir-loom chris-t'ning shawl,  
3. Not at first to lit-tle chil-dren nor to those whose faith burned bright,  
4. God, de-ter-mined to be dif-f'rent from the stan-dards we think best,  
5. Not ob-sessed by our a-chieve-ments, world-ly wealth or fam-'ly tree,



but the no-ones and the need-y were the first to hold God's hand.  
but a home-less, wan-d'ring cou-ple par-ent-ed the Lord of All.  
but to a-dults, stalled in dark-ness, an-gels brought God's love and light.  
in his choice of friends and fam-'ly lets for-got-ten folk be blessed.  
may we, in and with God's cho-sen, find our fond-est ped-i-gree.

\*\*\*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 *This Little Light of Mine (African American)*, arr. Edwin T. Childs

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**Today's Worship Leaders**

preacher  
liturgist  
musicians

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby  
Ellen Bradley  
Karen Caton, Shannon Jones, Chancel Choir

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