

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Second Sunday of Lent
March 1, 2026

**** *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

Gift of Love, Hopson/Kim

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

Andrea Bartlett

Holy One, you have set us in a place of beauty and wonder. Too often we look for the holy in magic and miracle.

Let us experience the goodness and God-ness of life in the many gifts of love.

Can you sense a love, a celebration of life in the songs of birds, the flowers of Spring, the beauty of the hills and mesas?

Creation stories from all tribal peoples tell us the promise of love written into everything that makes life possible.

Jesus told an old, wise elder stuck in his ways to be born again.

Each time we stretch our arms to hug and open our hearts to love we are reborn.

****HYMN

Love Round

All

Source unknown

fs

Last: E
Em

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Paul

MOMENT FOR MINISTRY

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

Andrea

OFFERTORY

Build A Longer Table, Bjorlin/Helgen

Choir

*Build a longer table, not a higher wall,
feeding those who hunger, making room for all.
Feasting together, stranger turns to friend,
Christ breaks walls to pieces; false divisions end.*

*Build a broader doorway, not a longer fence.
Love protects all people, sparing no expense.
When we embrace compassion more than fear,
Christ tears down our fences: all are welcome here.*

*Build a safer refuge, not a larger jail;
where the weak find shelter, mercy will not fail.
For any place where justice is denied,
Christ will breach the jail wall, freeing all inside.*

*When we lived as exiles, refugees abroad.
Christ became our doorway to the reign of God.
So must our tables welcome those who roam.
None can be excluded; all must find a home.*

****DOXOLOGY (tune: *Old Hundredth*)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God for all that love has done.
Creator, Christ, and Spirit One. Amen.**

****PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Andrea

God of love and life, help us to create a cathedral of love that goes far beyond the buildings we call churches. Send us out into a world starving for compassion and care. Inspire us to be voices of love and mercy wherever we go. Employ us as construction workers in your Cathedral of love. Amen

SCRIPTURE

John 3:1-16

Andrea

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

MESSAGE

"A Love Letter From God"

Paul

****HYMN NCH 498, vs 1-3

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love

All

Refrain

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.
Kneel at the feet of his friends, silently washing their feet,
Jesu, you acted as servant to them. *refrain*

Neighbors are rich and poor, varied in color and race,
neighbors are near and far away. *refrain*

These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should love;
all these are neighbors to us and you. *refrain*

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Gluten free options are available.)

Paul

All are welcome who practice the way of compassion.

****HYMN

We Walk In Love (See Insert)

All

****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 Walk in Love*

Martha

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Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
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Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Andrea Bartlett
Martha Jones