

**Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ**  
**Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**April 30, 2023**

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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**

*Prelude in C# Major, C. Maxwell Reilly*

Max Reilly

**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** --- Based on the 23rd Psalm

Joanne Drake

Our walk with the sacred leads us to refreshing waters.

**God guides us to walk in the paths of compassion.**

As we seek the ways of compassion let us remember to care for one another and support those who suffer.

**Our cup is filled with goodness, grace and mercy.**

Jesus encourages us to relax, rest and discover inner peace.

**Our faith also moves us to work for the day when all will find a place by the still waters of peace, mercy, love and justice.**

\*\*HYMN NCH 479, vs 1,2,4,5

*God is My Shepherd*

All

God is my shepherd, I'll not want, I feed in pastures green.  
God grants me rest and bids me drink from waters calm and clean.  
Through daily tasks, I'm blessed and led by One I have not seen.

Restored to life each morning new, I rise up from the dust  
to follow God whose presence gives me confidence and trust.  
I praise the name of God today; in God I put my trust.

No enemy can overcome, no power on earth defeat  
the ones anointed by God's grace and fed with manna sweet.  
My cup is filled and overflows as I my Savior greet.

Goodness and mercy all my days will surely follow me;  
and where God reigns in heaven and earth, my dwelling place will be.  
My shepherd blesses, cares, and leads through all eternity.

**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

Joanne

OFFERTORY

*Hallelujah, Leonard Cohen, arr Joel Raney*

Handbell Choir

\*\*DOXOLOGY (tune: *Lasst uns erfreuen*)

All

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

\*\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Joanne

**Source of Life, let us know that faith is stronger than our usual nagging fears. Let us experience the love and acceptance that is the heart of Jesus. Help us to discover that which is authentic, lasting, peaceful and welcoming. Amen**

HYMN Song Folder #10

*Come and Find the Quiet Center*

All

Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,  
find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:  
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes that we can see  
all the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.

Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,  
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base,  
making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,  
raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,  
let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:  
There's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,  
in the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 23

Joanne

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—  
they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.

MESSAGE

“If You Could Be Any Animal ...”

Paul

\*\*HYMN NCH 458

*I've Got a Feeling*

All

I've got a feeling, everything is gonna be all right.

O \_\_\_\_\_ I've got a feeling, everything is gonna be all right. *(repeat twice)*  
be all right, be all right, be all right.

Jesus already told me, everything is gonna be all right.

O \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus already told me, everything is gonna be all right. *(repeat twice)*  
be all right, be all right, be all right.

The Spirit has confirmed it, everything is gonna be all right.

O \_\_\_\_\_ the Spirit has confirmed it, everything is gonna be all right. *(repeat twice)*  
be all right, be all right, be all right.

\*\*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!

**Today's Worship Leaders**

preacher  
liturgist  
musician

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby  
Joanne Drake  
Max Reilly

**Acknowledgements**

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