

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Ninth Sunday After Pentecost
July 21, 2024

*** Some rise to their feet, some rise in their hearts—please rise as you are able.*

PRELUDE

Morning Prayer, Matt Schinske

Martha Jones

GATHERING BELL

At the sound of the bell, please silence yourselves and prepare for worship.

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

Julie Krueger

We live in a world of self-worship with endless streams of selfies to post.

How odd it is to have people send pictures of their dinner when we are not invited to share in the taste!

How weird is it when pictures of the Grand Canyon have heads that block every view of the beautiful, vast canyon!

Why exactly do we need to see a daily post of a co-worker's treatment of poison ivy?

God help us to see the Big Picture in the age of normalized narcissism.

Does anything exist beyond this collection of human selves in this vast universe?

Worship calls us to awaken to that which was there before we wet our first diapers.

In terms of time, since the Big Bang of creation, human beings are a mere wink in measured time.

**HYMN NCH 6, vs 1-3

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.

What God has made, God will preserve, with righteousness unfailing.

Regardless what we may deserve, we see this good prevailing.

To God who governs evermore with justice serving rich and poor,
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

Julie

OFFERTORY

For the Beauty of the Earth, John Rutter

Pam Gregory & Ellen Bradley

****OFFERING RESPONSE** (tune: *Holy Manna*)

All

**Lend your joy to all our giving, let it light our pilgrim way;
from the night of anxious keeping, loose us into generous day.
Open wide our hands in sharing as we heed Christ's ageless call,
healing, teaching, and reclaiming, honoring you by loving all.**

****PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Julie

Holy One, help us to create a world where people are free to work toward justice, mercy and peace. Use our gifts to share the mission of grace and acceptance in this community and beyond our many doors. Grant us the courage to open doors to faith, hope and love. Amen

****HYMN**

Ask the Complicated Questions (tune: *Stuttgart*)

All

Ask the complicated questions, do not fear to be found out;
for our God makes strong our weakness, forging faith in fires of doubt.

Seek the disconcerting answers, follow where the Spirit blows;
test competing truths for wisdom, for in tension new life grows.

Knock on doors of new ideas, test assumptions long grown stale;
for Christ calls from shores of wonder, daring us to try and fail.

For in struggle we discover truth both simple and profound;
in the knocking, asking, seeking, we are opened, answered, found.

SCRIPTURE

Romans 1:20-23, Psalm 8:1-5 [NRSVUE]

Julie

Ever since the creation of the world, God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been seen and understood through the things God has made. So they are without excuse, for though they knew God, they did not honor the Holy One as God or give thanks to the Holy One, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.

MESSAGE

"Did Human Beings Create God?"

Paul

****HYMN NCH 32**

God of The Sparrow, God of the Whale

All

God of the sparrow, God of the whale, God of the swirling stars,

How does the creature say Awe? How does the creature say Praise?

God of the earthquake, God of the storm, God of the trumpet blast,
How does the creature cry Woe? How does the creature cry Save?

God of the rainbow, God of the cross, God of the empty grave,
How does the creature say Grace? How does the creature say Thanks?

God of the hungry, God of the sick, God of the prodigal,
How does the creature say Care? How does the creature say Life?

God of the neighbor, God of the foe, God of the pruning hook,
How does the creature say Love? How does the creature say Peace?

God of the ages, God near at hand, God of the loving heart,
How do your children say Joy? How do your children say Home.

**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

Come Sunday, Duke Ellington

Martha

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musician

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Julie Krueger
Martha Jones

Acknowledgements

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