

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
“Ascension?” | Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 17, 2026

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

OPENING BELL

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

PRELUDE

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee, arr Joel Raney

Bell Choir

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

Holy One, You are beyond all concepts and constructs of theology.

Your creative love is manifest in all that sustains life and creation.

Yet our words and ideas can be so limited and misdirected.

**When people speak of heaven, they point upward, not realizing that would be downward
for the southern half of this planet.**

Too often our theology places Jesus in some distant galaxy.

**We affirm that the teachings of Jesus about mercy, love, peace and forgiveness are
within us. We sense the call of Jesus each time our conscience points us toward
compassion.**

****HYMN NCH 70

God is Here, As We Your People

All

God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.

Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace:

Here are table, font, and pulpit, here the cross has central place.

Here in honesty of preaching, here in silence as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold;

here as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.

Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living to believe and to adore.

Sovereign God, of earth and heaven, in an age of change and doubt
keep us faithful to the gospel, help us work your purpose out.

Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;

we, who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!

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.

SIXTY SECONDS FOR PERSONAL PRAYERS/SILENT CONTEMPLATION

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Julie

OFFERTORY

To You, I Lift My Soul, Diane Hannibal

Choir

****DOXOLOGY

Hal-le, hal-le hal-le-lu-ja.

All

****PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Julie

God who made us conscious, and created a space for conscience, we are grateful for the many nudges we get to help rather than harm, to listen instead of ignore, to be present rather than hide, to act with compassion, not sit back in indifference. As we dedicate our gifts, continue to nudge us on our journey. Amen

****HYMN NCH 270

Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song

All

Like the murmur of the dove's song, like the challenge of her flight,
like the vigor of the wind's rush, like the new flame's eager might:
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

To the members of Christ's body, to the branches of the vine,
to the church in faith assembled, to our midst as gift and sign:
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

With the healing of division, with the ceaseless voice of prayer,
with the power to love and witness, with the peace beyond compare:
Come, Holy Spirit, come.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:6-11, Mark 9:7; Matthew 24:30 (NRSVUE)

Kim

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see 'the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven' with power and great glory."

MESSAGE

"Cloud Cover: The Tall Tale of the Ascension"

****HYMN

Holy Dreamer, Joyful Healer (tune: *Ode to Joy*)

Holy dreamer, joyful healer, source and path and sacred call,
Life's companion, love abounding, truth and peace within us all,
As we come to know your welcome, may we ever sing your praise:
Hearts and minds and soul and bodies, glad and grateful all our days.

Holy dreamer, joyful healer, as we build community,
Showing up for one another, learning hospitality,
We take up your invitation, sharing love in faith and trust.
Now we live into your promise: healing can begin with us.

Holy dreamer, joyful healer, you have taught our hearts to care.
We will be your incarnation, seeking justice everywhere,
Standing with the pained and helpless, giving comfort, ending fear.
As we live your wondrous vision, we will know your realm is here.

****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

Hymn to Joy, Bach/Hopson

Ellen

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musicians

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Julie Krueger
Ellen Bradley

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