

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 22, 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

Be Still My Soul (Finlandia), Joel Raney

Cantabile Ringers

ANNOUNCEMENTS/MOMENT FOR MINISTRY

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

Jean McArthur

People in grief are often told to “move on,” or “face forward,” or even “get back in the game.”

But the heart has its own clock.

Grief is a reflection of loss and hardship.

We feel grief because we feel love.

We are in the healing, and healing and helping business. The mission of the church follows the steps of Jesus, to enter into places of pain with the presence of love.

Through love we discover the meaning of life. Through love we find a life worth living.

Through love our own fragmentation and alienation are healed.

****HYMN Song Folder #10

Come and Find the Quiet Center

All

Come and find the quiet center in the crowd-ed 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 with-in 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.

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

Jean

OFFERTORY

Always Loving Him, Leech/Tabeil

Choir

****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.**

****PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Jean

Holy One, Your words are given birth by the words of poets that announce that love is in the center of all creation. With these gifts we work to share the poetry of love with our community, our nation, and our world. Through our giving we share life with a village in Kenya, with courageous neighbors in Minneapolis, with disaster victims and with friends who come to find an encouraging word for this week. Amen

****HYMN Song Folder #11

Healer of Our Every Ill

All

Refrain

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow,
Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow.

You who know our fears and sadness, grace us with your peace and gladness;
Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts. *refrain*

In the pain and joy beholding how your grace is still unfolding,
give us all your vision, God of love. *refrain*

Give us strength to love each other, every sister, every brother;
Spirit of all kindness, be our guide. *refrain*

You who know each thought and feeling, teach us all your way of healing;
Spirit of compassion, fill each heart. *refrain*

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 5:4; John 11:17-45

Jean

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him.

MESSAGE

"Can It Be Good to Mourn?"

Paul

****HYMN (see insert)

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say (tune: Kingsfold)

All



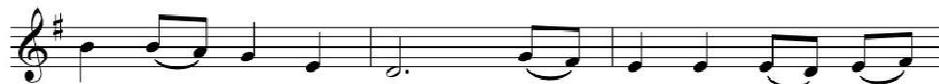
1. I heard the voice of Je - sus say, 'Come un - to me and
 2. I heard the voice of Je - sus say, 'Be - hold, I free - ly
 3. I heard the voice of Je - sus say, 'I am this dark world's



1. rest; lay down, thou wea - ry one, lay down thy head up -
 2. give the liv - ing wa - ter; thirst - y one, stoop down and
 3. light; look un - to me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy



1. on my breast'. I came to Je - sus, as I was, wea -
 2. drink, and live'. I came to Je - sus, and I drank of
 3. day be bright'. I looked to Je - sus, and I found in



1. ry and worn and sad; I found in him a
 2. that life - giv - ing stream; my thirst was quenched, my
 3. him my star, my sun; and in that light of



1. rest - ing place, and he has made me glad.
 2. soul re - vived, and now I live in him.
 3. life I'll walk till trav - ling days are done.

****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

Hope Eternal, Edward Broughton

Ellen Bradley

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musician

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Jean McArthur
Ellen Bradley

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