

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost
September 20, 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

I Will Sing of My Redeemer, J.F. Wilson
Based on *Hyfrydol* and J.S. Bach *Organ Prelude in F*

Ellen Bradley

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

Martha Jones

In the daily news of new greed, selfishness and evil, we often give up saying "What can I do as one person?"

We are called to faithfulness even when there is little chance of immediate change.

Congregationalists worked to end slavery for 163 years before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

Congregational churches invited women to vote 221 years before this nation gave women the right to vote.

Congregationalists pushed for civil rights for four decades before the civil rights legislation became law in 1965

Give us the courage to do the good we know to do and the integrity to keep praying for the day when we are delivered from leaders and policies that actively harm the poor, the sick, and our neighbors of color.

******HYMN NCH #4, vs 1-3**

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You

All

Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, God of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before you, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the storms of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.

All your works with joy surround you, earth and heaven reflect your rays,
Stars and angels sing around you, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain, teach us what our praise should be.

You are giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed,
Wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Loving Spirit, Father, Mother, all who love belong to you;
teach us how to love each other, by that love our joy renew.

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/CONTEMPLATION

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Martha

OFFERTORY

House of Grace, Joseph Martin

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**

Martha

God of goodness and help for the weak, the poor, the orphan and the widow, let us experience a glimpse of Your heart. We see in Jesus what it means to confront evil with compassion. We see in churches the flowing love and generosity. As we dedicate our gifts, help us to celebrate the gifts that already help and heal. Amen

HYMN

Keep Wide Your Heart (tune: *Trentham*)

All

Keep wide your heart to love, all it might ever be.
Count not the cost love may impose;
to pay it, our deepest need.

Keep wide your mind to truth, all it might ever mean.
All self-delusions, let them go
and truth, it will set you free.

Keep wide your life to dreams easing the fear-filled night,
until each possibility
glows with a persistent light.

Keep wide the road to hope. Clear off its weed-fill'd way,
that all might walk it, side by side,
into a more perfect day.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 15:1-14 [NRSVUE]

Martha

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat." He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' But you say that whoever tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,' then that person need not honor the father. So, for the sake of your tradition, you nullify the word of God. You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said:

'This people honors me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.' "

Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit."

MESSAGE

"Deliver Us From Evil"

Paul

****HYMN NCH 18

Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer

All

Guide me, O my great Redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but you are mighty; hold me with your powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain, where the healing waters flow.
Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, ever be my strength and shield,
ever be my strength and shield.

When I reach the River Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on heaven's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever sing to you,
I will ever sing to you.

****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

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee, Beethoven

Ellen

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musician

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Martha Jones
Ellen Bradley

Acknowledgements

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