

**Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ**  
**Seventh Sunday of Easter**  
**May 21, 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**

*Be Now My Vision*, arr. Max 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**

Julie Krueger

There are mysteries in the universe that no words or concepts can explain. There are dimensions that transcend human limitations.

**When Jesus leaves the disciples – where did he go?**

In the ancient world, people thought of heaven as somewhere, up there, beyond the clouds.

**People described heaven like it was a dream created in Hollywood where yellow brick roads were made of gold.**

What if heaven is a dimension of consciousness and awareness?

**We hope for an eternal community where love and light radiate from the very heart of the Eternal.**

What is heaven if it's not a geographical location?

**Heaven is where there is the fullness of love and peace.**

**\*\*HYMN 182**

*We Have Come at Christ's Own Bidding*

All

We have come at Christ's own bidding to this high and holy place,  
where we wait with hope and longing for some token of God's grace.  
Here we pray for new assurance that our faith is not in vain,  
Searching like those first disciples for a sign both clear and plain.

Light breaks through our clouds and shadows,  
splendor bathes the flesh-joined Word,  
Moses and Elijah marvel as the heavenly voice is heard.  
Eyes and hearts behold with wonder how the Law and Prophets meet:  
Christ with garments drenched in brightness, stands transfigured and complete.

Strengthened by this glimpse of glory, fearful lest our faith decline.  
We, like Peter, find it tempting to remain and build a shrine.  
But true worship gives us courage to proclaim what we profess,  
That our daily lives may prove us people of the God we bless.

**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

*Joy, Douglas Wagner*

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**

Julie

**Holy One, You are with us in every act of compassion. You are with us in the sharing that is true generosity. You are with us in the times when our hearts are enlightened enough to love. We celebrate the reality of Your presence in the caring work of the church. Amen**

HYMN NCH 285

*O Holy Dove of God Descending*

All

O holy Dove of God descending, you are the love that knows no ending,  
all of our shattered dreams you're mending: Spirit, now live in me.

O holy Wind of God now blowing, you are the seed that God is sowing,  
you are the life that starts us growing: Spirit, now live in me.

O holy Rain of God now falling, you make the Word of God enthralling,  
you are the inner voice now calling: Spirit, now live in me.

O holy Flame of God now burning, you are the power of Christ returning,  
you are the answer to our yearning: Spirit, now live in me.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:6-11, 2nd Kings 2:7-15

Julie

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."

Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of

them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over. When the company of prophets who were at Jericho saw him at a distance, they declared, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." They came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.

MESSAGE *"Did Jesus Beam Up?"* Paul

HYMN SPP #19 *Santo Espiritu* All

Holy Spirit, come and be with us; Holy Spirit, fill us with your peace;  
Holy Spirit, pour on us your grace; Holy Spirit, be with us, we pray.

Holy Spirit, come restore us; Holy Spirit, come and lift us;  
Holy Spirit, send your blessing on us; Holy Spirit, be with us, we pray;  
Holy Spirit, be with us we pray.

\*\*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!

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### Today's Worship Leaders

preacher	Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
liturgist	Julie Krueger
musician	Max Reilly

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