

**Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ**  
**Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost**  
**September 27, 2026**

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\*\*\*\* *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**

*Mercy*, Telemann

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**

Sandra Holloway

Jesus tuned into a Holy Compassionate Creator who inspired him to teach the path of forgiveness.

**Peter asked, how many times do I have to forgive (when I do not want to forgive at all).**

Jesus answered 70 times 7.

**Peter was less than happy with that answer. We often seek ways to get even or punish others who upset us.**

Jesus discouraged us from condemning the flaws of our neighbors. Who among us is perfect and has no moral blind spots?

**Jesus dared to face a mob ready to kill a woman and declare “Let the one who is without sin throw the first stone.”**

We have leaders who daily act out of revenge and hatred towards people who they judge unworthy of our nation. We have churches running campaigns to rob trans neighbors of civil rights.

**Help us to follow the way of Jesus and seek to live at peace with all our neighbors.**

**\*\*\*\*HYMN NCH #23**

*There's a Wideness in God's Mercy*

All

There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea.

There's a kindness in God's justice, which is more than liberty.

There's no place where earthly sorrows are more felt than in God's heaven.

There's no place where earthly failings have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader than the measures of the mind.

And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more faithful, we would gladly trust God's word,

and our lives would show thanksgiving for the goodness of our God.

**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

Sandra

OFFERTORY

*Keeper of the Song*, 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**

Sandra

**Source of Grace and peace, we see in the heart of Jesus one who forgives a criminal dying with him who was not baptized, or converted or a member of a spiritual community. Let us practice the way of forgiveness and peace. Let our gifts be used to generate greater mercy and caring in our community. Amen**

HYMN NCH #13, vs 1-3

*O My Soul, Bless Your Creator*

All

O my soul, bless your Creator; all within me bless God's name;  
Bless your Ma-ker, and forget not all God's mercies to proclaim.

God forgives all your transgressions, all who suffer, gently heals;  
God redeems you from destruction, and with you so kindly deals.

Far as east from west is distant, God has put away our sin;  
Like a mother, and a father, God compassionate has been.

SCRIPTURE

*Luke 6:37, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, Mark 2:5,  
Matthew 18:21-22, Luke 23:34 [NRSVUE]*

Sandra

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven;

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven."

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, up to seventy times seven.

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

MESSAGE

*"What to Say If Accused of Killing Jesus"*

Paul

**\*\*\*HYMN NCH #391, VS 1-3, 5**

*In the Midst of New Dimensions*

All

In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways,  
Who will lead the pilgrim peoples wandering in their separate ways?

*Refrain*

God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,  
We your people, ours the journey, now and ever, now and ever,  
now and evermore.

Through the flood of starving people, warring factions and despair,  
Who will lift the olive branches? Who will light the flame of care?

As we stand a world divided by our own self-seeking schemes,  
Grant that we, your global village, might envision wider dreams. *Refrain*

Should the threats of dire predictions cause us to withdraw in pain,  
May your blazing phoenix spirit resurrect the church again. Refrain

\*\*\*\*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

*God of Grace*, Manz

Ellen

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### **Today's Worship Leaders**

preacher  
liturgist  
musician

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby  
Sandra Holloway  
Ellen Bradley

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### **Acknowledgements**

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