

Welcome to First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

October 11, 2020

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

FIRST PEOPLES LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We want to acknowledge that we gather as First Congregational Church on the traditional land of the Wabanaki Confederacy, the Abenaki people and the Pennacook people, past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout a thousand generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of this land we inhabit as well.

PRELUDE

River Flows in You

(Adele)

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

UNISON OPENING PRAYER:

Faithful God of an unfaithful people, The people of Israel doubted your power and turned to other gods to fulfill their needs. We too, turn to other gods, seeking acceptance, power, and independence. Show us how to live humbly in you, and walk in your ways, in the name of the one who offered true power to all humanity, Jesus Christ. Amen.

SONG: #484

"O Come to Me, You Weary"

1 "O come to me, you weary, and I will give you rest.

"The blessed voice of Jesus, which comes to hearts oppressed!

It tells of benediction, of pardon, grace, and peace,

of joy that hath no ending, of love which does not cease.

2 "O come to me, you wanderers, and I will give you light."

The loving voice of Jesus, which comes to cheer the night!

Our hearts were filled with sadness, and we had lost our way;

but morning brings us gladness, and songs for each new day.

3 "O come to me, you fainting, and I will give you life."

The cheering voice of Jesus, which stills our inner strife!

The evil one surrounds us and would our faith subdue,

but you are strong within us, our courage brave and true.

4 "And you who come and seek me will never be cast out."

The welcome voice of Jesus, which drives away our doubt!

And though we are unworthy of love so free and true,

we hear your call to sinners; in trust to come to you.

The people saw that Moses was taking a long time to come down from the mountain. They gathered around Aaron and said to him, "Come on! Make us gods who can lead us. As for this man Moses who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't have a clue what has happened to him."

Aaron said to them, "All right, take out the gold rings from the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people took out the gold rings from their ears and brought them to Aaron. He collected them and tied them up in a cloth. Then he made a metal image of a bull calf, and the people declared, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf. Then Aaron announced, "Tomorrow will be a festival to the Lord!" They got up early the next day and offered up entirely burned offerings and brought well-being sacrifices. The people sat down to eat and drink and then got up to celebrate.

The Lord spoke to Moses: "Hurry up and go down! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, are ruining everything! They've already abandoned the path that I commanded. They have made a metal bull calf for themselves. They've bowed down to it and offered sacrifices to it and declared, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" The Lord said to Moses, "I've been watching these people, and I've seen how stubborn they are. Now leave me alone! Let my fury burn and devour them. Then I'll make a great nation out of you."

But Moses pleaded with the Lord his God, "Lord, why does your fury burn against your own people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and amazing force? Why should the Egyptians say, 'He had an evil plan to take the people out and kill them in the mountains and so wipe them off the earth'? Calm down your fierce anger. Change your mind about doing terrible things to your own people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, whom you yourself promised, 'I'll make your descendants as many as the stars in the sky. And I've promised to give your descendants this whole land to possess for all time.'" Then the Lord changed his mind about the terrible things he said he would do to his people.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing."
Meanwhile they were drawing lots to see who would win Jesus' clothing.

A Responsive Prayer for Clergy Appreciation Month:

For all the clergy who touched our lives in the past we are grateful. For childhood pastors, camp directors, chaplains met once who prayed before surgery, led a life-changing Bible study in a cell block, accompanied a college student to a protest, and unfamiliar "reverends" called in by a funeral home to shape a blessed memorial service for someone close to us –

We give you thanks and ask your tenderness to surround them.

For the clergy who accompany us now and those who care for those dear to us, we pray, and name for our own appreciating, not your information, these who need your grace.

Receive our prayers and grant your blessing.

Bless Pastors of churches who preach and visit and teach and pray, who assist church groups that have tasks and those that build relationships, who think about buildings and budgets, navigate new technologies and protocols for safety, and give from a source deep within.

Bless Ministers of Education who open minds, Pastoral Counselors who heal spirits, and, Ministers of Music who always lift hearts but this year seek new ways to share song.

Bless interims and conference staff, seminary faculty and supply preachers whose calls are itinerant and easily forgotten, but who can change lives.

Bless ordained and commissioned, licensed and lay, full-time and part-time ministers. Bless those who guide and shape accreditation processes and those who prayerfully respond to church conflict, assist in interventions, and work to keep churches safe.

Bless clergy who share their mistakes, affirm and celebrate the ministry of all believers, mediate compromises that cannot please everyone, and absorb some of the behavioral side effects of the anxieties of this year.

Bless clergy who have felt judgment based on ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, either end of the age spectrum, or who have been body-shamed or compared to the last pastor or the one across the street.

Bless those who modeled Sabbath and were called lazy, preached justice and were called interfering, celebrated the small church even in a tough stewardship year, shared hard truths, forgot to publicly thank someone or thank them enough, missed an important meeting, and still responded to criticism with grace and prayer.

Bless family and friends of clergy who sacrifice time, fun and elements of privacy, and offer wellsprings of support and hours of listening ... and bless amazing companion animals who are the best keepers of secrets and sources of laughter.

Bless, O God, clergy in the midst of this year's strange virtual search process with ingenuity and churches waiting for new clergy with patience. Bless people in discernment of ministry with bright hope and clergy retired from active ministry with well-sorted memories, cautious tongues and excellent boundaries.

Grant us always an appreciation of the many gifts of the Body of Christ, but particularly this month an appreciation of your children who are clergy. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (Translation by Neil Douglas-Klotz in Prayers of the Cosmos)

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos, focus your light within us - make it useful. Create your reign of unity now-through our fiery hearts and willing hands. Help us love beyond our ideals and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures. Animate the earth within us: we then feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all. Untangle the knots within so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other. Don't let surface things delude us, but free us from what holds us back from our true purpose. Out of you, the astonishing fire, returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.

AGAPE FEAST

CALL TO THE FEAST

PRAYER OF ADORATION:

Living God, you are present in our midst and we praise you. You are tearing down walls of alienation and exclusion. For this, we praise you because, in Jesus, you have shown us a way of hospitality, simplicity, prayer, peacemaking, and resistance. Because your Spirit makes a new path for us, as we struggle to live in the shadow of doubt and fear. Weak as we are, you fill us with hope. Lover of our souls, you give us joy and we praise you. Amen.

SIGNS & SYMBOLS

SHARING THE FEAST

“Open Unto Me” by Howard Thurman (Work of the People)

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

CLOSING SONG: #23

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

1 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 is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than in God's heaven:
there is no place where earthly failings have such kindly judgement given.

2 For the love of God is broader than the measures of our minds;
and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful, we would trust God's word;
and our lives would how thanksgiving for the goodness of our God.

BENEDICTION & SENDING

POSTLUDE

Prelude No.5 in G Major

(Adele)