

Welcome to First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ
November 8, 2020

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

The Church in the Wildwood

(Adel)

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

*CALL TO WORSHIP:

In deep gratitude we come to worship God.

We recognize God as the source of all goodness.

All good gifts come from the Spirit of God:

love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness are all of God.

We come with grateful hearts, not for things, but for who God is.

We gather to show our gratitude in song and prayer.

*BRINGING OURSELVES INTO GOD'S PRESENCE:

God of the seas, sky, and land - When Jonah turned to run from you, you showed him that nothing and no one could hide from your presence. You are in all things, and you love all things. Show us the gift of your presence, and help us to carry your word of compassion and grace to all the world, in the name of the one who carried out your love flawlessly, Jesus Christ our redeemer. Amen.

*OPENING HYMN: #422

Come, O Thankful People, Come

Come, ye thankful people, come,
Raise the song of harvest home;
All is safely gathered in
as the winter storms begin;
God our Maker does provide
For our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come,
Raise the song of harvest home.

All the blessings of the field,
All the stores the gardens yield,
All the fruits in full supply,
Ripened 'neath the summer sky,
All that spring with bounteous hand
Scatters o'er the smiling land,
All the liberal autumn pours
From its rich o'er flowing stores.

These to you, God, we owe,
Source from whom all blessing flow;
And for these our songs we raise,
Grateful vows and solemn praise.
Come then, thankful people, come,
Raise the song of harvest home;
Come to God's own temple, come,
Raise the song of harvest home.

NEW MEMBERSHIP RITUAL

INVITATION

SENTENCES

REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM OF THE NEW MEMBERS

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:

In this moment, I ask that everyone unmute themselves, so that we can hear the cacophony of our whole congregation joining in our affirmation of faith...

Let us unite with the church in all times and places in confessing our faith in the triune God.

Do you believe in God?

I believe in God.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

I believe in Jesus Christ.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Spirit.

Amen. I will now re-mute everyone.

ADDRESS AND QUESTION OF PARTICIPATION TO THE NEW MEMBERS

WELCOME AND RECEPTION:

Let us, the members of First Congregational Church of Concord, NH UCC, express our welcome to Rev. Rebecca Maccini and Rev. Pam Spain, and affirm our mutual ministry in Christ, by an exuberant shaking of "jazz hands." And let us join together in our unison spoken welcome:

We welcome you with joy in the common life of this church. We promise you our friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of the church of Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge and love and be witnesses of Jesus Christ.

RITUAL CLOSING PRAYER

HYMN OF GRATITUDE AND CELEBRATION: #425

For the Fruit of All Creation

For the fruit of all creation, Thanks be to God.

For God's gifts to every nation, Thanks be to God.

For the plowing, sowing, reaping, Silent growth while we are sleeping,

Future needs in earth's safe-keeping, Thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labor, God's will is done.

In the help we give our neighbor, God's will is done.

In our world-wide task of caring For the hungry and despairing,

In the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit, Thanks be to God.

For the good we all inherit, Thanks be to God.

For the wonders that astound us, For the truths that still confound us,

Most of all, that love has found us, Thanks be to God.

JONAH 1:1-17

Narrator: One day the word of the Eternal One came to the prophet Jonah.

Eternal One: Get up, and go to that powerful and notorious city of Nineveh. Call out My message against it because the wickedness of its people has come to My attention.

Narrator: In hearing those instructions, Jonah got up and ran toward Tarshish from the Eternal's presence. He went down to the port at Joppa and found a ship bound for Tarshish. He climbed aboard, paid the fare, and made himself comfortable in the hold of the ship.

Not to be deterred, the Eternal One threw an intense wind at the sea. The violence of the storm put Jonah's ship in jeopardy of breaking apart. The sailors panicked! They started running back and forth, throwing cargo overboard to lighten the boat; every man, out of desperation, cried to his own deity. Eventually, a sailor found Jonah down in the hold of the ship, where he had lain down and fallen into a deep slumber. When the captain heard, he went down and woke Jonah up.

Captain: How can you sleep so deeply? Get up, and call out to your deity! Maybe your deity will see what is happening and save us from this catastrophe.

Sailors (to one another): You know what we should do? We should cast lots to find out who is ultimately responsible for our distress!

Narrator: So they cast their lots, and Jonah's name was chosen.

Sailors: Who are you? We must know who is responsible for this disaster that would swallow us in the sea. What do you do? Where are you from? What country is your home? Whom are you descended from?

Jonah: I am Hebrew, and the God whom I worship is the Eternal One, the God of heaven. He made the sea and the land, so He controls them.

Narrator: After interrogating him, the sailors were terrified because Jonah had told them he was running away from the Eternal's presence.

Sailors (to Jonah): What have you done? Because of you, we're all going to be killed. (shouting over the building storm) What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?

Jonah (shouting back): God is using the sea to punish me, so pick me up and throw me into the sea! Then the sea will grow calm again, and you'll be safe! This is all my fault! This great storm of my God's anger has built against you because of me!

Narrator: The sailors fear what will happen to them if they kill one of God's people. The sailors ignored Jonah's advice and tried to row back to land. They made no headway because the violence of the storm kept growing.

Sailors (to God): Eternal One! Please, we beg You—do not kill us as if we had murdered this man. And don't punish us as if we'd killed an innocent person. We understand that You, Eternal One, do as You please.

Narrator: At that, they grabbed Jonah by his arms and legs and threw him overboard. And when they did, the raging sea grew calm. The sailors were even more terrified of the Eternal One. They offered sacrifices to Him and made promises to Him. The Eternal didn't let Jonah die. He chose a large fish to swallow Jonah; for three days and three nights the prophet Jonah sat safely inside the belly of this fish.

JONAH 3:1-10

Narrator: The word of the Eternal came to the prophet Jonah a second time.

Eternal One: Get up, and go to that powerful and notorious city of Nineveh, and pass on to them the message I'm giving you.

Narrator: Having learned his lesson, Jonah yielded to the Eternal's command and headed on the road to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was an important city, so large that it took three days to travel throughout it. Jonah had barely begun to walk the first day's journey into the city when he stopped.

Jonah (shouting out to the people of Nineveh): After 40 days, Nineveh will be annihilated.

Narrator: With that announcement, the people of Nineveh started to trust in Jonah's God! Every person—whether young or old, rich or poor, male or female—fasted and wore a sack as a sign of remorse for his past wickedness. The people of Nineveh told each other about this, until the news made it all the way to the king of Nineveh, who ruled the entire Assyrian Empire. The king changed from his royal robes to sackcloth, and instead of sitting up high on his throne, he sat down low in the dust. He sent an official message to his subjects.

King of Nineveh: By order of the king of Nineveh and his nobles, "No human being, animal, cattle, or flock may taste anything. None of them may go out to eat or drink any water. Instead let both humans and animals cover themselves with sacks. Let all who belong to this empire call to God sincerely and turn from their wicked ways and violent acts. Perhaps Jonah's God will show mercy and relent from His judgment. Perhaps out of compassion He will not unleash His fierce anger against us, and we may be spared."

Narrator: God saw all they did and how they turned from their evil ways. So He relented and decided not to unleash the disasters He said He would through His servant Jonah.

JONAH 4:1-11

Narrator: The mercy God extended toward Nineveh upset Jonah terribly. The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. So he prayed to the Eternal.

Jonah: Eternal One, isn't this what I said would happen when I was still in my own country? This is exactly the reason I ran away to Tarshish in the first place. I know how You are! I know that You are not like other gods, that You are full of grace and compassion, that it takes a lot to make You angry, and that Your loyal love is so great that You are always ready to relent from inflicting misery. Eternal One, since You didn't kill them, please take my life away from me. For my death now is so much better than my life tomorrow.

Eternal One: Jonah, do you have any good reason to be angry?

Narrator: Jonah headed east out of the city instead of west toward his home to look for a place high above the city to sit down. He found a suitable spot and built a shelter from the hot sun. He sat there waiting to see what might happen to the city. Then the Eternal God chose a gourd plant to grow up and to shade Jonah from the discomfort of the intense heat. The large, thick leaves of this vine made Jonah very, very happy. But at dawn the next day, God chose a worm to chew through the gourd's vine; that night, it shriveled. Then when the sun rose, God chose a scorching east wind to blow. As the sun beat down from a cloudless sky on Jonah's head, he became faint. Again, he asked to die.

Jonah: My death now is so much better than my life tomorrow.

Eternal One: Do you have any good reason to be angry about this gourd's vine?

Jonah: Yes, I do. I'm angry enough to die.

Eternal One: Jonah, don't you understand? You care about this gourd's vine, and yet you didn't do anything to make it grow; you didn't plant it, water it, or protect it. It appeared one night then died another. Should I not have pity on that great city of Nineveh where there are more than 120,000 people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?

SONG FOR REFLECTION "Down to the River to Pray,"
performed by Bethel College Choir

SHARING OUR SACRED STORIES "Assembly Room"

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PUBLIC MOMENT OF MOURNING

PASTORAL PRAYER (written by Rev. Abi)

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.

CLOSING HYMN: #420 We Praise You, O God

We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
in grateful devotion our tribute we bring;
we lay it before you; we kneel and adore you;
we bless your holy name: glad praises we sing.

We worship you, God of our mothers and fathers;
through life's storm and tempest our guide you have been;
when perils o'er take us, you never forsake us,
and with your help, O God, in life's struggles we win.

With voices united our praises we offer,
and gladly our songs of thanksgiving we raise;
our sins now confessing, we pray for your blessing;
to you, our great Redeemer, forever be praise!

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

BENEDICTION & SENDING

Go into the world showing a gentle attitude toward everyone. Be joyful and thankful! Fill your mind with those things that are good, truthful, noble, kind, beautiful, and honorable. Put into practice what you have heard here. And may the God who gives peace be with each of you.

**We go in the peace of Christ to love and serve all creation. Thanks be to God!
Amen.**

POSTLUDE

Battle Hymn of the Republic

(Adel)