

# Welcome to First Congregational Church



Robert Selden Duncanson, *Landscape with Rainbow*

*1859 Duncanson was a free black man from Cincinnati, Ohio, and is considered to be the first African American artist with an international reputation. A vocal abolitionist, there is debate whether he used his art work to convey those ideas in paint. His work is firmly in the tradition of American landscape painting of the time. This painting was symbolically gifted to President Joe Biden on the occasion of his inauguration in 2021, and the Smithsonian director who presented it, certainly interpreted the rainbow as a symbol of hope for America.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Question for reflection for Sunday, January 12th: If you could safely and easily visit any planet in our solar system, which one would you visit and why?

**Celebration of African American Art & Music: TODAY!!!**

By request, we are presenting the event that we shared on Holy Saturday 2024 again, this time at St. Paul's Episcopal Church on Sunday, January 12th from 2-4pm. Please join us and invite a friend or two to attend!

**Racial Justice Team:** for our next discussion on Tuesday, January 14th we are reading *The First Ladies* by Marie Benedict & Victoria Christopher Murray. You are invited to join us on Zoom for the discussion at 10am, followed by our meeting at 11am.

**Page Turners** for January: We are reading *The Measure: A Novel* by Nikki Erlick, and all are invited to join us for the discussion on January 27th from 2-3pm in the Chapel at Wesley or on Zoom.

# Welcome to First Congregational Church

*An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ*

January 12, 2025

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Cold Frosty Morning

Annie Papinsick

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (Genesis 1:1-25, The Voice)

In the beginning, God created everything: the heavens above and the earth below. Here's what happened: At first the earth lacked shape and was totally empty, and a dark fog draped over the deep while God's spirit-wind hovered over the surface of the empty waters. Then there was the voice of God.

**Let there be light.**

And light flashed into being. God saw that the light was beautiful and good, and separated the light from the darkness. God named the light "day" and the darkness "night." Evening gave way to morning. That was day one.

**Let there be a vast expanse in the middle of the waters. Let the waters above part from the waters below.**

So God parted the waters and formed this expanse, separating the waters above from the waters below. It happened just as God said. And God called the vast expanse "sky." Evening gave way to morning. That was day two.

**Let the waters below the heavens be collected into one place and congregate into one vast sea, so that dry land may appear.**

It happened just as God said. God called the dry land "earth" and the waters congregated below "seas." And God saw that the new creation was beautiful and good.

**Earth, sprout green vegetation! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants and all sorts of fruit-bearing trees.**

It happened just as God said. And God saw that the new creation was beautiful and good. Evening gave way to morning. That was day three.

**Lights, come out! Shine in the vast expanse of heavens' sky dividing day from night to mark the seasons, days, and years. Lights, warm the earth with your light.**

It happened just as God said. God set them in the heavens' to cast warm light on the earth, to rule over the day and night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that the new creation was beautiful and good. Evening gave way to morning. That was day four.

**Waters, swarm with fish and sea creatures. Let birds soar high above the earth in the broad expanse of sky.**

So God created huge sea creatures, all the swarms of life in the waters, and every kind and species of flying birds—each able to reproduce its own kind. And God saw that the new creation was beautiful and good. And God spoke this blessing over them:

**Be fruitful and multiply. Let creatures fill the seas. Let birds reproduce and cover the earth.**

Evening gave way to morning. That was day five.

**Earth, generate life! Produce a vast variety of living creatures—domesticated animals, small creeping creatures, and wild animals that roam the earth.**

It happened just as God said. God made earth-creatures in a vast variety of species: wild animals, domesticated animals of all sizes, and small creeping creatures, each able to reproduce its own kind. God saw that the new creation was beautiful and good. And then, God paused...

COMING INTO THE INVISIBLE EMBRACE OF BEAUTY (by Helene Cixous; French writer and playwright)  
**"Because difference constitutes music... Sound is[...]the rubbing of notes between two drops of water, the breath between the note and the silence, the sound of thought. To write is to note down the music of the world."**

OFFERING OUR MOMENTS OF BEAUTY

SONG: #4

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You

Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, Lord 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, enter 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.

Mortals, join the happy chorus, which the morning stars began;  
Boundless love is reigning o'er us, reconciling race and clan.  
Ever singing, move we forward, faithful in the midst of strife,  
Joyful music leads us onward in the triumph song of life.

Hear now Psalm 125 from the Rev. Benjamin Chavis psalter...  
Psalter Lesson Psalm 125  
Here ends the Psalter Lesson.

**Amen.**

Let us continue now from the Hebrew Scriptures in Genesis...  
Hebrew Scriptures Genesis 1:26-31 (NRSVUE)  
Here ends the Lesson.

Jim Wildman

**Amen.**

Hear now from the Hebrew Scriptures  
Hebrew Scriptures Psalm 98:4-9 (NRSVUE)  
Here ends the Lesson.

Jim Wildman

**Amen.**

Here now from the Gospel of John...  
Gospel Lesson John 1:1-5, 10-15 (The Voice)  
Here ends the Lesson.

Jim Wildman

**Amen.**

SERMON     The Music of Beauty: the Music of the Earth     Rev. Emilia Halstead

PAUSING FOR MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

SONG:        #563                                We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky

We cannot own the sunlit sky, Ruth Duck

Text: © 1992, GIA Publications, Inc.

Reprinted/Podcast/Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE, License #A-739671. All rights reserved.

Global Ministries Weekly Prayers: Sierra Leone

*(Prayer and mission moment: written by KC King, Music Teacher for the Council of Churches of Sierra Leone and Ballanta Academy of Music)*

Mission Moment from Sierra Leone

Prayers with Sierra Leone

Heavenly Father, we come to you with open hearts and minds as we thank you for the blessing of community and all it does to help us, keep us, and grow us. We thank you for the joy the festive season has brought us. It has been a time to enjoy the company of loved ones, reflect on the mountaintops and valleys of the year, and celebrate your son Jesus' birth.

**We also see the ways in which we have fallen short of your desire for our lives and your purpose. We pray that you baptize us in the way only the Holy Spirit can, in the way you told us in the Gospel of Luke, God.**

We pray that in your divine timing, issues like food security and energy access will start to improve. Under the current government, the import tax on rice alone has risen from 5% to 10%. Give Sierra Leone the resources it needs to see lasting change, and let those in power be good stewards of the responsibility given to them.

**This and more is our prayer to you, Lord. We will forever give you glory and thanks for the continuous blessings you have poured into our lives. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE  
(Response to each prayer:)  
Creating God,  
**Receive our prayers.**

PASTORAL PRAYER (written by Thom Shuman)

Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy 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 thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Sung Amen: #562

Take My Gifts [verse 3]

Take my gifts, Gibson / Murray

Text: © 1992, New Zealand Hymnbook Trust

Reprinted/Podcast/Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE, License #A-739671. All rights reserved.

Take whatever I can offer--gifts that I have yet to find,  
skills that I am slow to sharpen, talents of the hand and mind,  
things made beautiful for others in the place where I must be:  
take my gifts and let me love you, God who first of all loved me.

Offertory

Invitation (adapted from prayer written by written by Bishop Telmor Sartison)

GRATITUDE MUSIC

For The Beauty of the Earth

Annie Papinsick

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (adapted from prayer written by written by Bishop Telmor Sartison)

**We come, O God, as children. Give us the grace to serve you with the gifts and skills you have first given us. Bless the gifts especially of those who serve as caregivers in all corners of life. Give them the grace and power of your own love that they might bless all with whom they work and live. Amen.**

CLOSING SONG: #556

God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens

God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens, Catherine Cameron

Text: © 1967, Hope Publishing Co.

Reprinted/Podcast/Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE, License #A-739671. All rights reserved.

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

GREATEST COMMANDMENT

SENDING & BLESSING (adapted from prayer written by Rev. Richard J. Fairchild)

POSTLUDE

The Wind That Shakes the Barley

Annie Papinsick