

Welcome to First Congregational Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ
November 1, 2020

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prelude Amazing Grace (Adel)

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Blessed be the name of our God from this time forth and forever more!

From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of God is to be praised.

It is good to give thanks to God, to sing praises to your name, O Most High.

To declare, O God, your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night fills us with awe and wonder.

BRINGING OURSELVES INTO GOD'S PRESENCE:

God of compassion, by your power, Elijah provided bread and oil for the widow and her household. By faith in You, the widow provided food and water for Elijah. Give us hearts to love one another, so that in providing and in receiving, we too, might experience the unimaginable power of God, through the one who has provided life itself, your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

OPENING HYMN: #295 I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

I sing a song of the saints of God,
faithful their whole lives through,
who bravely labored, lived, and died
for the God they loved and knew.
And one was a doctor, and one was a queen,
and another a shepherd in pastures green:
they were saints of God, if you know what I mean,
God, help me to be one too.

They loved their God and they lived that love,
It was loving and made them strong.
They did what was right for Jesus' sake,
lived justly their whole lives long.
And one was a prophet, and one was a priest,
and another was slain by a fierce wild beast;
There is no earthly reason, none in the least,
why I shouldn't be one too.

They lived not only in ages past;
there are hundreds of thousands still.
The world is filled with living saints
who chose to do God's will.
You can meet them in school, on the road, or at sea,
in a church, in a train, in a shop, or at tea:
for the saints are folk like you and like me,
and I mean to be one too.

LITANY PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

Gracious God, we confess what seems always with us:

broken things within us that never seem to mend, empty places within us that always to ache, and things like buds within us that never seem to flower.

O God of love and grace, help us accept ourselves;

lead us to do good and true things that are not compromised by anything within us. As much as can be, mend us, fill us, and make us bloom. For all these things, we will give you the glory, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Moment of Silence

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

HEBREW SCRIPTURES: 1 Kings 17:1-16 (The Voice)

Elijah the Tishbite, one of the Gilead settlers, spoke to Ahab.

Elijah: As the Eternal lives—the True God *who gives life* to the Israelites, the God whom I serve—no rain or dew will touch the earth unless I give word.

The Eternal One gave him this message:

Eternal One: *3 I want you to travel away from this place and go east. Keep yourself hidden near the Cherith stream, east of the Jordan. 4 You will have water from the stream during this drought, and I will tell the birds to take care of you while you are hiding there.*

Elijah did just as the Eternal had instructed him to do. He lived near the Cherith stream, east of the Jordan. *6 The ravens did take care of him while he was there, just as the Lord said*, bringing him a meal of bread and meat at sunrise and *another meal of bread and meat at sunset*. He *satisfied his thirst by drinking from the stream*. *7 Soon the stream became dry because of the drought*.

The Eternal One gave him this message:

Eternal One: Get up, and travel to Zarephath. It is in the possession of Sidon, *which is outside Israel*. Remain there, *and do not leave for any reason*. There is a widow in Zarephath whom I have told to take care of you.

10 Elijah got up and *immediately traveled to Zarephath*. He arrived at the city gate, and at that moment, a widow was picking up sticks nearby.

Elijah: Please bring me some water in a jar to quench my thirst.

11 (as she fetched the water) Also, could you please bring me a piece of bread?

Woman: *12 As certain as the Eternal One, your True God lives, I don't have any bread. In fact, I am starving. I don't have anything except for a bit of flour in a bowl and a few drops of oil in a jar. I was gathering sticks when you arrived to make a fire so that my son and I could eat one last bite of food and then die. It's all over for us.*

Elijah: *13 I assure you that it's not over for you yet. Don't be afraid. Continue what you were doing, but make a small bread cake for me first, and bring it here to me. Then you and your son may eat your own bread cakes. 14 This is the message of the Eternal God of Israel: "The flour and the oil will not run out until the moment when the Eternal showers the earth with rain."*

15 She did exactly as Elijah had instructed her to do, and everyone who lived in her house had food for days. 16 The bowl of flour and the jar of oil did not run out, just as the Eternal had said through Elijah.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & PASTORAL PRAYER

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.

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION & REMEMBERING THE SAINTS

COMMUNION HYMN: #332

As We Gather at Your Table

As we gather at your Table,
 as we listen to your Word,
 help us know, O God, your presence;
 let our hearts and minds be stirred.
 Nourish us with sacred story
 till we claim it as our own;
 teach us through this holy banquet
 how to make Love's victory known.

Turn our worship into witness
 in the sacrament of life;
 send us forth to love and serve you,
 bringing peace where there is strife.
 Give us, Christ, your great compassion
 to forgive as you forgave;
 may we still behold your image
 in the world you died to save.

Gracious Spirit, help us summon
 other guests to share that feast
 where triumphant Love will welcome
 those who had been last and least.
 There no more will envy blind us
 nor will pride our peace destroy,
 as we join with saints and angels
 to repeat the sounding joy.

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 4:24-26 (The Voice)

²⁴ But face the truth: hometowns always reject their homegrown prophets.

²⁵ Think back to the prophet Elijah. There were many needy Jewish widows in *his homeland*, Israel, when a terrible famine persisted there for three and a half years. ²⁶ Yet the only widow God sent Elijah to help was *an outsider* from Zarephath in Sidon.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION:

God is present with each of us,

And in our hearts

Open yourself to the nudging God.

We feel the breath of the Spirit.

Remember God made flesh,

Jesus, who taught us a new way.

REMEMBERING THE SAINTS

PUBLIC MOURNING

COMMUNION PRAYER:

This is the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Tender, transforming God, you have invited us to gather at this table,

To taste the feast, to hear the same abundant promises offered to our ancestors in faith.

Time and time again you've offered your grace,

Even as we have stepped away, you continue to call us to be your people

You have never left us.

We praise you for second, third and fourth chances. You are ever-patient, always faithful.

We give thanks for this time of celebration.

For the One this meal remembers, for the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

With the saints and ancestors who have gone before us,

Whose hands touched the bread, whose lips embraced the cup: We worship you and glorify your name.

BREAKING BREAD AND POURING WINE:

Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:

"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine after supper:

"This is my blood, poured out for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

PRAYER FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT:

God of all, send your Spirit into every place where your living people are gathered: in Concord, in the United States, and around the world. We also welcome to this feast all of the Saints including our ancestors of past and those of the future. Bring us all together, as one, in this present moment in Paradise, here and now.

Be with us God, not only here but in every moment of our lives. Help us to know you, to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and to live following Christ, now and forever.

Amen.

SHARING THE FEAST

"Sing me to heaven" by Daniel Gawthrop
Performed by Octarium, 2011 (YouTube)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Creative, connecting God, you have sent your Spirit and made us the Body of Christ—from child-like faith, to youthful energy, from middle-aged mindfulness, to elder's wisdom. We thank you for this time, this remembrance.

Increase our faith with courage!

Help us to love boldly!

Encourage us to act fearlessly!

1 For all the saints who from their labors rest,
 who to the world their steadfast faith confessed,
 your name, O Jesus, be forever blessed.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!

2 You were their rock, their refuge, and their might;
 you, Christ, the hope that put their fears to flight;
 'mid gloom and doubt, you were their one true light.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!

3 Still may your people, faithful, true, and bold,
 live as the saints who nobly fought of old,
 and share with them a glorious crown of gold.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!

4 Ringed by the cloud of witnesses divine,
 we feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
 yet in your love our faithful lives entwine.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!

5 And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,
 steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
 then hearts are brave again, and faith grows strong.
 Alleluia! Alleluia!

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

BENEDICTION & SENDING:

Strangers meet.

Oil and grain turn to bread.

The sick are healed.

The weary are lifted up.

The prisoners are set free.

The everyday becomes a miracle.

This is God's work.

We are its witnesses.

We are the Light-bearers.

Let us go forth, living as followers of Jesus.

Our worship has ended, our service now begins.