

# Welcome to First Congregational Church

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

April 25, 2021

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### FIRST PEOPLES LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge that the land on which we worship, live, work, and commune is the original homelands of the Wabanaki Confederacy, the Abenaki people and the Pennacook people. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory, and we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples still connected to this land on which we gather.

### PRELUDE

Morning Fog by Robert D Vandall

Adele

## SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (by J. Philip Newell "Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter")

You are above us, O God; you are within.

**You are in all things, yet contained by nothing.**

Teach us to seek you in all that has life, so that we may see you as the Light of life.

**Teach us to search for you in our own depths, so that we may find you in every living soul.**

Bringing Ourselves into God's Presence:

(by J. Philip Newell from "Praying with the Earth: A Prayerbook for Peace")

**At the beginning of the day we seek your countenance among us, O God, in the countless forms of creation all around us; in the sun's rising glory, in the face of friends and strangers. We seek your presence within every presence, your Light within all light, your heart at the heart of this moment. May the new light of morning wash our sight, so that we may see your Life in every life this day. Amen.**

SONG: #329

Jesus, the Joy of Loving Hearts

Jesus, the joy of loving hearts,  
fount of our lives, and light of all:  
From every bliss that earth imparts  
we turn unfilled to hear your call.

For you our restless spirits yearn,  
where're our changing lot is cast;  
glad, when your smile on us you turn,  
blessed when by faith we hold you fast.

O Jesus, ever with us stay!  
Make all our moments calm and bright!  
Oh, chase the cloud of sin away!  
Shed o'er the world your holy light.

## AGAPE FEAST

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON

Acts 8:26-39 (NRSV)

Tim Wildman

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth."

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

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

"Take Me to the Water"

Nina Simone

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 24:44-47 (NRSV)

<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

SERMON

"What's to Prevent Us?"

Rev. Emilia Halstead

SONG: #326

Crashing Waters at Creation

Crashing waters at creation ordered by the Spirit's breath,  
First to witness day's beginning from the brightness of night's death.

Parting water stood and trembled as the captives passed on through,  
Washing off the chains of bondage channel to a life made new.

Cleansing water once at Jordan closed around the One foretold,  
Opened to reveal the glory ever new and ever old.

Living water, never ending, quench the thirst and flood the soul.  
Wellspring, Source of life eternal, drench our dryness, make us whole.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PASTORAL PRAYER (from J. Philip Newell, "Celtic Treasure")

Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

## SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

Jesus loves me! This I know,  
 For the Bible tells me so;  
 Little ones to Him belong;  
 They are weak, but He is strong.

**Refrain:**

Yes, Jesus loves me!  
 Yes, Jesus loves me!  
 Yes, Jesus loves me!  
 The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! This I know,  
 As He loved so long ago,  
 Taking children on His knee,  
 Saying, "Let them come to Me." **(Refrain)**

Jesus loves me still today,  
 Walking with me on my way,  
 Wanting as a friend to give  
 Light and love to all who live. **(Refrain)**

BENEDICTION: (by J. Philip Newell "Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter")

Before us in the planned shape of this day,

**We look for unexpected surgings of New Life.**

Around us in the people whom we know and love,

**We look for unopened gifts of promise.**

Within us, in the familiar sanctuary of our own souls, we look for shinings of the Everlasting Light; before us, around us, within us.

**We look for your life-giving mystery, O God; before us, around us, within us.**

**Amen.**