

# Welcome to First Congregational Church

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

**September 13, 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

"We All Bleed the Same" (by Mandisa, mp3)

## SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

### UNISON OPENING PRAYER:

**Lord God, grand architect of the universe, Your design of creation is unflawed. Yet we continue to litter your creation with defects and imperfections. Show us how not to destroy, but to create, not to demean, but to uplift, not to hate, but to love, so that your creation may be made perfect once again. Amen.**

### SONG: #73

Enter, Rejoice, and Come In

**1** *Enter, rejoice, and come in. Enter, rejoice, and come in.*

*Today will be a joyful day; enter, rejoice, and come in.*

**2** *Open your ears to the song. Open your ears to the song.*

*Today will be a joyful day; enter, rejoice, and come in.*

**3** *Open your hearts everyone. Open your hearts everyone.*

*Today will be a joyful day; enter, rejoice, and come in.*

**4** *Don't be afraid of some change. Don't be afraid of some*

*change. Today will be a joyful day; enter, rejoice, and come in.*

**5** *Enter, rejoice, and come in. Enter, rejoice, and come in.*

*Today will be a joyful day; enter, rejoice, and come in.*

HISTORIC MOMENT ABOUT FIRST CHRISTIAN WORSHIP SERVICE

EVERETT SIMS

*Genesis 2:4b-7*

On the day the heavens and earth were created, there were no plants or vegetation to cover the earth. The fields were barren and empty, because the Eternal God had not sent the rains to nourish the soil or anyone to tend it. In those days, a mist rose up from the ground to blanket the earth, and its vapors irrigated the land. One day the Eternal God scooped dirt out of the ground, sculpted it into the shape we call human, breathed the breath that gives life into the nostrils of the human, and the human became a living soul.

*Genesis 2:15-17*

The Eternal God placed the newly made human in the garden of Eden in order to work the ground and care for it. God made certain demands of the human regarding life in the garden.

God said: Eat freely from any and all trees in the garden; I only require that you abstain from eating the fruit of one tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Beware: the day you eat the fruit of this tree, you will certainly die.

*Genesis 3:1-8*

Of all the wild creatures the Eternal God had created, the serpent was the craftiest.

Serpent said to Eve: Is it true that God has forbidden you to eat fruits from the trees of the garden?

Eve said: No, serpent. God said we are free to eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. We are granted access to any variety and all amounts of fruit with one exception: the fruit from the tree found in the center of the garden. God instructed us not to eat or touch the fruit of that tree or we would die.

Serpent said: Die? No, you'll not die. God is playing games with you. The truth is that God knows the day you eat the fruit from that tree you will awaken something powerful in you and become like Him: possessing knowledge of both good and evil.

The woman approached the tree, eyed its fruit, and coveted its mouth-watering, wisdom-granting beauty. She plucked a fruit from the tree and ate. She then offered the fruit to Adam who was close by, and he ate as well. Suddenly their eyes were opened to a reality previously unknown. For the first time, they sensed their vulnerability and rushed to hide their naked bodies, stitching fig leaves into crude loincloths. Then they heard the sound of the Eternal God walking in the cool misting shadows of the garden. Adam and Eve took cover among the trees and hid from the Eternal God.

## GOSPEL LESSON

## Luke 11:4 (The Voice)

And forgive us for our wrongs,  
for we forgive those who wrong us.  
And lead us away from temptation.  
[And save us from the evil one.]

## HOMILY

## "Forgiving the Serpent"

Rev. Emilia Halstead

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Our Father who art in heaven: remind us this day,  
**that you are not only creation's Architect,  
but you are the Babe who cried for food,  
the teenager who knew loneliness,  
the adult who felt the rejection of loved ones.**

Hallowed by Thy name:  
**yours is the name spun by the stars;  
yours is the name whispered by the dying;  
yours is the name written on our hearts.**

Thy Kingdom come:  
**may it be a kingdom of peace, not prejudice;  
may it be a kingdom of sharing, not grasping;  
may it be a kingdom of hope, not hurting.**

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven:  
**may your Word be more than print on a page;  
may your justice be more than a wish in our hearts;  
may your will become our deepest desire.**

Give us this day our daily bread:  
**let us taste it in the goodness of the harvest;  
let it fill us in the empty moments of our lives;  
let it slip out of our hands to mend the brokenness of our world.**

And forgive us our debts as we forgive others:  
**may those who have hurt us find a welcome in our hearts,  
even as we have found our home in yours.**

And lead us not into temptation:  
**turn our hearts from the seductions of our world;  
and the simple pleasures that turn us from you.**

**Keep us from thinking we are so important  
that we ignore those around us.  
Help us to always bring others to you in prayer,  
before we bring ourselves,  
as we do in these moments:**

*Prayers are lifted for others*

But deliver us from evil:  
**not just great evils of war and hunger,  
but from ingratitude, prejudice, pride, and  
all those little evils that do such great harm.**

For thine is the kingdom:  
**our heart's true longing;**  
and the power:  
**which you set aside to serve us in weakness;**  
and the glory:  
**which we would mirror in our lives,  
our bodies, our minds, our souls,  
this day and every day.**  
Forever and ever.  
**Amen**

## SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

CLOSING SONG: #563

We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky

*We cannot own the sunlit sky, the moon, the wild-flowers growing,  
For we are part of all that is within life's river flowing.  
With open hands receive and share the gifts of God's creation,  
That all may have abundant life in every earthly nation.*

*When bodies shiver in the night and weary wait for morning,  
When children have no bread but tears, and war horns sound their warning,  
God calls humanity to awake, to join in common labor,  
That all may have abundant life, oneness with their neighbor.*

*God calls humanity to join as partners  
in creating a future free from want or fear.  
Life's goodness celebrating, that new world beckons from afar,  
Invites our shared endeavor that all might have abundant life  
and peace endure forever.*

BENEDICTION & SENDING