

**United Church of Christ, First Congregational
Norwich, New York
September 13, 2020**

A TIME OF GATHERING AS WE PREPARE TO WORSHIP GOD

PRELUDE *Herr Jesu Christ dich zu uns wend*
Bob Oehme, organ

J. S. Bach

WELCOME (Pastor John)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Linda Oehme)

PRAYER OF THE DAY¹ (Miranda Hunter)

O God who is our strength,
you have protected us from those who would seek to oppress us.
You have shielded us from those who would seek to destroy the good gifts you have put in us.
Your love and power never fail.
Thanks and praise to you, our safety and stronghold.
We exalt you, O God, majestic in holiness, for there is none like you. **Amen.**

CALL TO WORSHIP¹ (Linda Oehme)

Give praise to God!
Praise the Lord, for it is God who saves. . . .
It is God who forgives. . . .
It is God who delivers. . . .
Give thanks and praise to the Lord!

HYMN *O My Soul Bless Your Creator*

Anonymous
words reprinted from The Presbyterian Hymnal,
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Tune: STUTTGART

CHILDREN'S TIME (Linda Oehme)
The Lord's Prayer

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE Exodus 14:19-31 (Linda Oehme)

¹⁹ The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. ²⁰ It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. ²² The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. ²⁴ At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. ²⁵ He clogged^[a] their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. ²⁹ But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

³⁰ Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

SCRIPTURE Romans 14:1-12 (Miranda Hunter)

14 Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. ² Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. ³ Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵ Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. ⁶ Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

⁷ We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God.”

¹² So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

ANTHEM *What A Covenant*

Elisha A. Hoffman, 1887

Tune: LEANING Anthony J. Showalter, 1887

What a covenant, what a joy divine,
leaning on the everlasting arms.
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain

*Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.*

Oh, how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
leaning on the everlasting arms.
Oh, how bright the path grows from day to day,
leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
leaning on the everlasting arms?
I have blessed peace with my Savior near,
leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain

SCRIPTURE Matthew 18:21-35 (Miranda Hunter)

²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³ “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents[□] was brought to him; ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii;[□] and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister[□] from your heart.”

SERMON (Pastor John)

INTERLUDE *Jesus Lover of My Soul*
Bob Oehme, organ

Tune: MARTYN by Simeon B. Marsh

PASTORAL PRAYER (Pastor John)

CLOSING HYMN *God Loved The World* (208)

Heiliges Lippen und Herzens Opfer, Stettin, 1778
Transl. August Crull, 1845
Word alterations © 1994 The Pilgrim Press
Tune: ROCKINGHAM, Adapt. Edward Miller, 1790

BLESSING¹ (Pastor John)

May the God who protects and defends
keep you in safety, mercy, and love.
In the name of God, Christ
and the Holy Spirit.

POSTLUDE

March in G

from "Marches: Service Music Series"
Bob Oehme, organ

by Henry Smart
Arr. by Franklin Ritter
compiled by Geoffrey R. Lorenz, Lorenz Publishing © 1988

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