

United Church of Christ, First Congregational
Norwich, New York
January 31, 2021

A TIME OF GATHERING AS WE PREPARE TO WORSHIP GOD

PRELUDE *Prelude on "Pleading Savior"*
Bob Oehme, organ

David Paxton

WELCOME (Pastor John)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Linda Oehme)

PRAYER OF THE DAY (Lilit Danielyan)

Almighty God, Light from Light,
who commands the universe and all that is made,
your Word is the power that makes whole what is broken,
the force of good, and the food of peace.
Teach us now as you taught in the synagogue.
Heal us now so that in all that we say and do,
the freedom we have in you may be for others, too;
in Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

CALL TO WORSHIP (Brad Morrison)

Come! Let us give thanks to the Lord with whole hearts.

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Glory be to the One whose wonders are to be remembered.

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The Lord feeds the righteous with truth.

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Come! Let us give thanks to God.

HYMN *Hope of the World*

Words by Georgia Harkness, 1954
Tune: WELWYN by Alfred Scott-Gatty, 1900

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

CONGREGATIONAL GREETING OF PEACE

ONE: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE (John Kolb)

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ² Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; ³ but anyone who loves God is known by him.

⁴ Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one." ⁵ Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷ It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸ "Food will not bring us close to God." We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹ But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰ For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? ¹¹ So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. ¹² But when you thus sin against

members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

ANTHEM *O How I Love Jesus*

Frederick Whitfield, 1855

There is a name I love to hear,
I love to sing its worth;
It sounds like music to my ear,
The sweetest name on earth.

Refrain

*O how I love Jesus, O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
Whose love has first found me*

It tells my Savior's love for all;
Christ died to set us free;
Whatever problems may befall,
we'll live in dignity.

Refrain

It bids me serve amid the wrath
God's people face each day,
And sheds along life's troubled path
bright sunshine on my way.

Refrain

SCRIPTURE (Brad Morrison)

Mark 1:21-28

²¹ They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²² They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴ and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸ At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

SERMON (Pastor John)

INTERLUDE *Two Anthems: II*
from the *Practical Organist, Op. 39*
Bob Oehme, organ

Alexandre Guilmant

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (Pastor John)

Let us pray for the needs of the world, saying,
Hear us, O God, your mercy is great.

For the healing of Earth and all its creatures;
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For the church's willingness to cast out demons in its midst,
for congregations that are in turmoil,
for the healing of divisions between the followers of Christ Jesus;
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For leaders of nations,
for those who have great wealth,
for those who have too much power,
for those who have destructive weapons,
and for those who have none;
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For those who are victims of others' idolatry,
for children who have no one to listen to their cries for food and shelter,
for parents who cannot answer the needs of their children,
for peacemakers and diplomats,
for those who give through charities,
and for those who use the law
to make policies for the greater good;
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For all who are in pain and in need of care,
especially those we name now aloud or silently, . . .
[A time of silence is kept.]
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

For the wisdom to fear you rightly,
the power to withstand changes in our own lives
that bring us closer to you,
for the ability to give thanks for the people
who have brought us to this time—
our ancestors, teachers, pastors, and the martyrs of every age;
hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

Into your hands we commend all those for whom we pray
and those it would be easy to forget.
We ask your blessing on all your people,
that we may come at last to the truth
around your banquet table that has no end;
through Christ Jesus, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING (Pastor John)

Go out from this place to a world fully known by God.
Where there is fear, remember the authority of Christ Jesus.
Where there is need of love, give it.
Where there is pain, bring peace.
For you are loved by the One who redeems,
and freed to live by the Word of life.

POSTLUDE *Praise to God the Father*
Bob Oehme, organ

Franklin Ritter

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