

**United Church of Christ, First Congregational
Norwich, New York
August 8, 2021**

PRELUDE *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*
Jason Handy, piano

C.W. Walz (American Folk Tune)

WELCOME (Pastor John)

PRAYER OF THE DAY (Melodie Posner)

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Sovereign. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Linda Oehme)

CALL TO WORSHIP (Meena and Neil Conant)

ONE: This is the day that God has made;

ALL: let us rejoice and be glad in it.

ONE: O Come, let us worship with glad and open hearts;

ALL: let us give thanks and praise to God, our Maker.

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.

AFFIRMING OUR FAITH (Jason Handy and Brad Morrison)

United Church of Christ Statement of Faith in the form of a doxology

ONE: We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit,

ALL: God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

ONE: You call the worlds into being,

ALL: create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

ONE: You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

ALL: You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

ONE: In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot,

ALL: conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

ONE: You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit,

ALL: creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

ONE: You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others,

ALL: to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

ONE: You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace,

ALL: courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

ONE: Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

ALL: Amen.

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE (Meena Conant)

2 Samuel 18: 5-9, 15, 31-33

⁵ The king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders concerning Absalom.

⁶ So the army went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. ⁷ The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. ⁸ The battle spread over the face of all the country; and the forest claimed more victims that day than the sword.

⁹ Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on.

¹⁵ And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him, and killed him.

³¹ Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, "Good tidings for my lord the king! For the LORD has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up against you." ³² The king said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man."

³³ The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

ANTHEM *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*

Words and Music by Thomas A. Dorsey, 1932
Tune: PRECIOUS LORD

Precious Lord, take my hand,
 lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night,
 lead me on to the light.
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear,
 precious Lord, linger near,
when my life is almost gone,
Hear me cry, hear my call,
 hold my hand, lest I fall:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When the shadows appear
 and the night draws near,
and the day is past and gone,
At the river I stand,
 guide my feet, hold my hand:
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

SCRIPTURE (Jessica Posner)

John 6:41-51

⁴¹ Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴² They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" ⁴³ Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

SERMON (Pastor John)

INTERLUDE *Breathe on Me Breath of God* (#292)
Jason Handy, organ

Tune: TRENTHAM
Robert Jackson, 1894

A LITANY OF INTERCESSION (NCH #878) (Pastor John)

ONE: Gracious God, who loves all and forgets none, we bring to you our prayers for all your children. For all whom we love, watch over, and care for;

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: For all prisoners and captives, and all who suffer from oppression, that you will manifest your mercy toward them, and make all hearts as merciful as your own.

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: For all who bear the cross of suffering, the sick in body or mind;

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: For all those who are troubled by the sin or suffering of those they love;

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: For all who are absorbed in their own grief, that they may be raised to share the sorrows of others, and know the saving grace of the cross;

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: For all perplexed by the deeper questions of life and overshadowed with doubt, that your light may guide them;

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: For all who are tried by temptations or weakness, that your mercy maybe their strength.

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: For all who are lonely and sad in the mist of others' joy, that they may know you as their friend and comforter;

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: For the infirm and aged and for all who are dying, that they may find their strength in you and light at the evening time;

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: For all forgotten by us, but dear to you;

ALL: Hear us, O God.

ONE: O compassionate God, hear our prayers, answer them according to your will, and make us channels of your infinite grace, through Jesus Christ we pray.

ALL: Amen.

BLESSING (Pastor John)

May the steadfast love of God give you hope,
the redeeming power of Christ give you courage,
the abiding presence of Spirit give you strength,
as you serve the will of God
this day and every day.

POSTLUDE *With Joyful Hearts*
Jason Handy, piano

Faye López

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