

United Church of Christ, First Congregational
Norwich, New York
September 5, 2021 – Live Recording

PREPARING TO WORSHIP GOD

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

PRELUDE *Ave Verun Corpus, op. 45 no. 6*
Jason Handy

by Marcel Dupre

WELCOME (Pastor John)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Pete Williams)

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP (Pete Williams)
Our merciful God, maker of us all,
pleads the cause of the poor and afflicted.
Open our hearts to demonstrate God's grace
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

INVOCATION (Pastor John)
Good and generous God,
you have blessed us with favor and counted us
as your people
through our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.
Freed by your grace, let us extend your generosity
to others,
sharing our bread with the poor, pleading the
cause of the afflicted,
and receiving all who assemble in your name
with the warmth of your love and the richness
of your hospitality;
in the good name of Jesus Christ,
our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

OPENING HYMN *To God Compose a Song of Joy* (#36 to tune of 42)

Ruth Duck, 1986

Tune: AZMON by Carl G. Gläser 1828

To God compose a song of joy; to God make melody,
Whose arm of strength does wondrous things, whose hand brings victory!

Before the nations God reveals a just and righteous will,
Remembering in faithful love the house of Israel.

In every corner of the earth, God comes to save and free;
Break forth with shouts of holy joy; all lands, make melody.

Let seas in all their fullness roar; sing, people of all lands;
Let mountains join and sing for joy; let rivers clap their hands.

The God of justice comes to save; let earth make melody;
For God will judge with righteousness and rule with equity.

TIME OF SHARING

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

PASTORAL BLESSING OF PEACE (Pastor John)

OFFERTORY PLEDGE (Pastor John)

ONE: We love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

ALL: We pledge our whole selves to God.

ONE: We love our neighbors as ourselves.

ALL: We pledge to do justice as Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation.

ONE: We love one another as Jesus loves us.

ALL: We pledge to be and become Christ's Beloved Community in our life together.

ONE: We make disciples by teaching and modeling how to follow Jesus' Way of Love.

ALL: We pledge to be Jesus' disciples sharing Jesus' Way of Love in the way we live our lives and practice our faith.

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE READING (Pete Williams)

James 2:1-10, 14-17

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? ² For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, ³ and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? ⁷ Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

⁸ You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ⁹ But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

SCRIPTURE READINGS (Pastor John)

Psalms 146

¹ Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

² I will praise the LORD as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

³ Do not put your trust in princes,

in mortals, in whom there is no help.

⁴ When their breath departs, they return to the earth;

on that very day their plans perish.

⁵ Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the LORD their God,

⁶ who made heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that is in them;

who keeps faith forever;

⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed;

who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;

⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;

the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD watches over the strangers;

he upholds the orphan and the widow,

but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever,

your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD!

Mark 7:24-31

²⁴ From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, ²⁵ but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. ²⁷ He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁸ But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." ²⁹ Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰ So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. ³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis.

ANTHEM *Open The Eyes of My Heart*
(combined choirs of UCC and Broad St. UMC)

Words and music by Paul Baloche
Choral arrangement by Jack Schrader

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord.
Open the eyes of my heart.
I want to see you.
See you high and lifted up.
Shining in the light of Your glory.
Pour down your power and love as we sing holy, holy, holy.

SERMON (Pastor John)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

INTERLUDE *Prelude in C Major BWV 846*
Jason Handy

by J.S. Bach

AFFIRMING OUR FAITH (Pete and Pastor John)
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.

SHARING OF JOYS/CONCERNS (Pastor John)

PASTORAL PRAYER (Pastor John)

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

INVITATION:

ONE: In Luke's Gospel we read that Jesus, at the table with two of the disciples, took bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, and their eyes were opened, and they recognized the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread.

In the Acts of the Apostles we read that as the church was gathered, often in the homes of the believers, Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and community, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers.

ALL: Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, we gather at your table to know you in the breaking of the bread.

COMMUNION PRAYER:

ONE: Holy God, we praise and bless you for creation and the gift of life and for your abiding love which brings us close to you, the source of all blessing. We thank you for revealing your will for us in the giving of the law and in the preaching of the prophets.

ONE: We thank you especially that in the fullness of time you sent Jesus, born of Mary, to live in our midst, to share in our suffering, and to accept the pain of death at the hands of those whom Jesus loved. We rejoice that in a perfect victory over the grave you raised Christ with power to become sovereign in your realm. We celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to gather your church by which your work may be done in the world and through which we share the gift of eternal life.

ALL: With the faithful in every place and time, we praise with joy your holy name: Holy, holy, holy, God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God Most High.

ONE: We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, Jesus also took the cup, after supper, saying: "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

ONE: Consecrate, therefore, by your Holy Spirit, these gifts of bread and wine, and bless us that as we receive them at this table, we may offer you our faith and praise, we may be united with Christ and with one another, and we may continue faithful in all things.

In the strength Christ gives us, we offer ourselves to you, eternal God, and give thanks that you have called us to serve you. Amen.

BREAKING BREAD AND POURING WINE:

Through the broken bread we participate in the body of Christ.

Through the cup of blessing we participate in the new life Christ gives.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS:

Eat this, for it is the body of Christ, broken for you.

Drink this, for it is the blood of Christ, shed for you.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

ALL: We thank you, God, for inviting us to this table where we have known the presence of Christ and have received all Christ's gifts. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and let us show forth your praise in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

CLOSING HYMN *We Live by Faith and Not by Sight* (#256)

Henry Alford, 1944

Tune: DUNLAP'S CREEK by Samuel McFarland, 1816

Harmonization by Richard Proulx, 1986

We live by faith and not by sight;
no gracious words we hear
From Christ who spoke as non e'er spoke,
who still we know is near.

We may not touch Christ's hands and side,
nor follow where Christ trod;
But in confessing we rejoice:
our Savior and our God!

Help then, O Christ, our unbelief;
and may our faith abound
To call on you when you are near
and seek where you are found:

That when our life of faith is done,
in realms of clearer light
We may behold you as you are
with full and endless sight.

BENEDICTION (Pastor John)

Our generous God has blessed us
and surrounded us with favor forever,
that we may love our neighbors as ourselves
through the good name of Jesus Christ, our Savior
and Lord.

POSTLUDE *Trumpet Tune in C*
Jason Handy

By Henry Purcell
Arranged by Robert Lau

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