

United Church of Christ, First Congregational  
Norwich, New York  
September 12, 2021 – Live Stream

**PREPARING TO WORSHIP GOD**

**CHIMING OF THE HOUR**

**PRELUDE** *Tis So Sweet to Trust In Jesus*  
Jason Handy

by Gilbert M. Martin

Tune by William J. Kirkpatrick).

**WELCOME** (Pastor John)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** (Mary Williams)

**GATHERING**

**CALL TO WORSHIP** (Mary Williams)

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;  
**our God is full of compassion.**  
Let us walk in the presence of the Lord  
in the land of the living,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**INVOCATION** (Pastor John)

God of love,  
you teach us a life journey that calls us to deny  
what is unhealthy and unloving.  
Lead us in that pathway.  
Awaken us to the ever-new abundance  
that is ours through your Word,  
in the name of the one who died and rose,  
Christ Jesus, our Lord, who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN** *This is a Day of New Beginnings* (#417)

Brian Wren, 1978

Tune: BEGINNINGS by Carlton R. Young, 1987

This is a day of new beginnings, time to remember and move on,  
Time to believe what love is bringing, laying to rest the pain that's gone.

For by the life and death of Jesus, God's mighty Spirit, now as then,  
Can make for us a world of difference, as faith and hope are born again.

Then let us, with the Spirit's daring, step from the past and leave behind  
our disappointment, guilt, and grieving, seeking new paths, and sure to find.

Christ is alive, and goes before us to show and share what love can do  
This is a day of new beginnings- our God is making all things new.

**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** (Mary Williams)

James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. <sup>2</sup>For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. <sup>3</sup>If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. <sup>4</sup>Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, <sup>8</sup>but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup>From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> this ought not to be so. <sup>11</sup>Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? <sup>12</sup>Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

**SCRIPTURE READING** (Pastor John)

Mark 8:27-38

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" <sup>28</sup>And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." <sup>29</sup>He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." <sup>30</sup>And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup>Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

<sup>34</sup>He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words<sup>[a]</sup> in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

**SPECIAL MUSIC** *Impromptu Op. 90 No. 3*

Franz Schubert

**SERMON** (Pastor John)

**RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

**INTERLUDE** *It is Well With My Soul*  
Jason Handy

By Ron Loree  
Tune: Ville du Havre by Phillip P. Bliss

**AFFIRMING OUR FAITH**

**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)

**COMMISSION AND BLESSING**

**CLOSING HYMN** *God Speak To Me That I May Speak* (#531) Frances Ridley Havergal, 1872

Meena Conant, Mary Williams, Jason Handy, voice  
Bob Oehme, organ

Tune: CANONBURY  
Arranged by Robert Schumann, 1872

**BENEDICTION** (Pastor John)

May the teachings of your Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,  
and the presence of the one God who abides with you always,  
keep you strong and gentle,  
for the sake of the goodness that is willed for you,  
in Jesus' name.

**POSTLUDE** *Recessionale*  
Jason Handy

by Gerald Peterson

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