

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost
September 29, 2024

*** Some rise to their feet, some rise in their hearts—please rise as you are able.*

GATHERING BELL

At the sound of the bell, please silence yourselves and prepare for worship.

PRELUDE

The Lord's My Shepherd, arr Larry Hackley

Shannon Jones

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Paul Ashby

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

**Whoever you are...and wherever you are on life's journey...
you are welcome here!**

OPENING REFLECTION

CALL TO WORSHIP

Andrea Bartlett

From the dawn of human consciousness, people have wondered about the afterlife.

Powerful Pharaohs and Kings prepared immense tombs packed with everything they needed for the world beyond.

Even primitive hunters were buried with their bows and arrows and supplies for the journey.

Greeks and Romans were buried with coins to pay the ferryman to cross the River Styx to the next realm.

The Gospel proclaims the hope that our consciousness continues in a community of love born in the heart of God.

We do not know what is beyond the doorway of death. We do not know what is beyond the curtain of this life. We hold in our hearts the hope that the love, beauty, grace and goodness we have experienced will continue in this life and beyond.

**HYMN NCH 479, vs 1,2

God is My Shepherd

All

God is my shepherd, I'll not want, I feed in pastures green.
God grants me rest and bids me drink from waters calm and clean.
Through daily tasks, I'm blessed and led by One I have not seen.

Restored to life each morning new, I rise up from the dust
to follow God whose presence gives me confidence and trust.
I praise the name of God today; in God I put my trust.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Paul

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Respond to each shared prayer request with "Peace, Shalom, Salaam."

PASTORAL PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Andrea

OFFERTORY

How Can I Keep From Singing, arr. Ginger B. Littleton

Chancel Choir

**OFFERING RESPONSE (tune: *Holy Manna*) All

**Lend your joy to all our giving, let it light our pilgrim way;
from the night of anxious keeping, loose us into generous day.
Open wide our hands in sharing as we heed Christ's ageless call,
healing, teaching, and reclaiming, honoring you by loving all.**

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION Andrea

God of life, we are grateful for every glimpse of beauty, every taste of grace, every act of love and compassion and every accomplishment of what is good. Let our gifts and resources be used to open new doors to beauty, grace, love compassion and goodness. Amen

** HYMN NCH #478 *I've Got Peace Like a River* All

I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river in my soul.
I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river,
I've got peace like a river in my soul.

I've got joy like a fountain . . . in my soul.

I've got love like an ocean . . . in my soul.

I've got faith like an anchor . . . in my soul.

SCRIPTURE *John 12:32, 1 Corinthians 15:12-26, Ephesians 1:9-10* [NRSVUE] Andrea

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that they raised Christ—whom they did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human, for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in its own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when Christ hands over the kingdom to God, after Christ has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

God has made known to us the mystery of their will, according to their good pleasure set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.

MESSAGE *“Let's Make A Deal – Views on The Afterlife”* Paul

**HYMN NCH 479, vs 3,4,5

God is My Shepherd

All

When I must pass through shadowed vale, where loss and death await,
I will not fear for God is there, my shepherd strong and great,
Whose rod and staff will comfort me and all my fears abate.

No enemy can overcome, no power on earth defeat
the ones anointed by God's grace and fed with manna sweet.
My cup is filled and overflows as I my Savior greet.

Goodness and mercy all my days will surely follow me;
and where God reigns in heaven and earth, my dwelling place will be.
My shepherd blesses, cares, and leads through all eternity.

**BENEDICTION

Paul

** SUNG BENEDICTION

World Peace Prayer

All

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,
From despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace,
Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,
Let peace fill our universe!

GREETING ONE ANOTHER IN THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

RECESSIONAL

How Can I Keep from Singing, arr Lori Line

Shannon

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby

liturgist

Andrea Bartlett

choir director

Dr. Keri Rusthoi

musician

Shannon Jones

Acknowledgements

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