

Welcome to First Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Homecoming Sunday
September 15, 2024

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

PRELUDE Shannon Jones
Gather Us In, arr Jeffrey Honore'

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

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 Debra Weller

Home is where you know you are welcome.

Home is where it does not matter what clothes you wear.

Home is where you can rest

Home is where you can be yourself.

Home is where you can live the words of Buddhist teacher Suzuki Roshi who told his students,
"You are perfect just as you are but we could all use a little improvement!"

**Home is where one is accepted with all of their weaknesses, flaws and past mistakes and
loved as a child of God.**

**HYMN Song Folder 1, vs. 1,2,4 All
Gather Us In

Here in this place new light is streaming, now is the darkness vanished away.
See in this space our fears and our dreamings, brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken. Gather us in, the blind and the lame;
Call to us now and we shall awaken. We shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young, our lives are a mystery; We are the old who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of hist'ry, called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty. Gather us in, the proud and the strong;
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly. Give us the courage to enter the song.

Not in the dark of buildings confining, not in some heaven light years away,
But here in this place the new light is shining. Now is the kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever. Gather us in and make us your own;
Gather us in, all peoples together, fire of love in our flesh and our bones

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 Debra

OFFERTORY

Come Just As You Are, Joseph Sabolick

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

Debra

**Holy One, we are grateful for every home where we have been welcomed at and accepted.
We celebrate the homes of friends, the homes of co-workers, the homes of church
members, the homes of neighbors where we experienced love. Use these resources to
inspire the church to be a center of love and welcome that can be called home. Amen**

**HYMN SPP #33

There's a Spirit of Love in This Place

All

There's a spirit of love in this place. There's a spirit of love in this place.
You can't see it, but it's there, just as precious as the air.
There's a spirit of love in this place.

There's the presence of peace in this room. There's the presence of peace in this room.
In God's tenderness is found peace that passes human bounds.
There's the presence of peace in this room.

O alleluia, sing alleluia! We bless your holy name.
O alleluia, sing alleluia. There's a spirit of love in this place.

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 56:1-3;6-7 [NRSVUE]

Debra

Thus says the Lord:

Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come
and my deliverance be revealed.
Happy is the mortal who does this,
the one who holds it fast,
who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it,
and refrains from doing any evil.
Do not let the foreigner joined to the Lord say,
"The Lord will surely separate me from his people,"
and do not let the eunuch say,
"I am just a dry tree."
And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it
and hold fast my covenant—
these I will bring to my holy mountain
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar,
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.

MESSAGE

"Welcome Home"

Paul

**HYMN NCH #391, VS 1,3,5 *In the Midst of New Dimensions*

All

In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways,
Who will lead the pilgrim peoples wandering in their separate ways?

Refrain

God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,
We your people, ours the journey, now and ever, now and ever,
now and ever more.

As we stand a world divided by our own self-seeking schemes,
Grant that we, your global village, might envision wider dreams. *Refrain*

Should the threats of dire predictions cause us to withdraw in pain,
May your blazing phoenix spirit resurrect the church again. *Refrain*

**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

I Love to Tell the Story, arr Charles Ore

Shannon

Today's Worship Leaders

preacher
liturgist
musicians

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
Debra Weller
Shannon Jones, Martha Jones

Acknowledgements

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