

# First Congregational United Church of Christ

June 25, 2023



John Baptizes Jesus by JESUS MAFA

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Ministers: All who are a part of this church

Pastor: Rev. Enno K. Limvere

Musician: Francie Beaster

Peace Candle Lighter:

Liturgist:

**Gathering Music**

**Words of Welcome**

**Prelude - Make a Joyful Noise—Psalm 100 by B.J. Muus**

## Words to Enter Worship (Based on Psalm 86)

People who were baptized as infants: **There is none like you among the gods, O LORD, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you.**

People who were baptized as youths: **For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. Teach me your ways that I may walk in truth; give me an undivided heart to love you.**

People who were baptized as adults: **I give thanks to you O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered me from death.**

People who aren't baptized: **But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Turn and be gracious, give your strength to your children.**

## Opening Hymn #397 Thank Our God for Sisters, Brothers

1. Thank our God for sisters, brothers, one by grace, in harmony, Joining heart to heart with others, making strong community. With cross of Christ our standard, let us sing as with one voice. Glory, glory, yours the promise: we who are the church rejoice.
2. Praise to God for congregations, keeping faith with Christ as guide; Many tongues of many nations, song and service unified. Sweet the psalm and sweet the carol, when our song is raised as one. Glory, glory, yours the power, as in heaven your will be done.
3. Holy is your name for ever! Heal divisions that remain; Bless the church's new endeavors; make our witness one again. One in Christ and in Christ's gospel, make us one we now implore. Glory, glory, yours the glory, then and now and ever more.

Words used by permission of Roger Powell.

## Words of Poetry & Lighting the Candle of Peace

It is a custom in our congregation to light our Peace Candle during worship, as a witness to the Prince of Peace and our communal intention to be peace-makers as a Just Peace Church.

### Paradox and Paradigms by Rev. Enno K. Limvere

Born-again or born-anew,  
Life begins or love renews,  
Water, Spirit, Body, Mind,  
What do we take with us or leave behind?

Born of earth or heavenly sent,  
Clothes of glory or tattered rent,  
Wisdom from below or from above,  
What or who is the God of love?

Washing, cleansing, making whole,  
Reuniting body and soul,  
Connecting us to every heart,  
Nevermore alone and nevermore apart.

## Passing of the Peace

## Scripture Readings John 3:1-21

**3** Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup> What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” <sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”

<sup>11</sup> “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup> “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

**Children’s Message** What is baptism?

**Choir Anthem** In the Dawn of Every Morning

**Message** Water and Spirit

## Re-Affirmation of Baptism

### Service of Water

#### Greeting

One: Dear Friends, on this morning of prayerful vigil as we come to this font of living water, let us recall the meaning of baptism. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

**Many: For by one Spirit, we are all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of the one Spirit.**

One: Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

#### Blessing of Water

One: Let us pray. We thank you, God, for the gift of creation called forth by your saving Word... Bless by your Holy Spirit, Gracious God, this water that by it we may be reminded of our baptism into Jesus Christ and that by the power of your Holy Spirit we may be kept faithful until you receive us at last in your eternal home.

**All: Glory to you, eternal God, the one who was, and is, and shall always be, world without end. Amen.**

## Renewal of Baptism Vows

One: Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

**Many: I do.**

One: Do you believe in God?

**Many: I believe in God, the creator of heaven and earth.**

One: Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

**Many: I believe in Jesus: teacher, prophet, & Christ.**

One: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

**Many: I believe in the Holy Spirit.**

One: Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and community, in the breaking of bread and in prayer?

**Many: I will, with God's help.**

One: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being?

**Many: I will, with God's help.**

## Blessing of the People

One: Let us pray.

Eternal God, you have come to us in Jesus Christ, given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and the renewing of our hearts and minds. Bless us now with the grace we need to fulfill what we have promised.

**Many: Keep us faithful to our Savior Jesus Christ, for ever and ever. Amen.**

[Sprinkling in Remembrance of our Baptism](#)

[Affirmation and Proclamation of our Identity as an Easter people](#)

## Musical Reflections

### Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, Mother God, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen**

## News of God at Work in our Congregation & Community

### Our Time of Giving

### Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;*

*Praise Christ, all creatures here below;*

*Praise Holy Spirit, making us one;*

*Justice and peace under the sun. Amen*

## Closing Hymn #376 God, We Thank You for Our People

1. God we thank you for our people, roots dug deep within the soil, hardy spirits, rich in loving, strong for struggle, bold for toil. Faithful Rock of generations, you whom parents' parents praised: Here in hope as we remember may our song to you be raised.
2. Thank you, God, for gentle pleasure: lessons learned and secrets told, hopes and memories save as treasure, passed to young ones by the old, Pranks and glories, songs and stories, food by loving hands prepared. God, we bless you for your presence in our tears and laughter shared.
3. Still we must confess before you, sometimes, Savior, we have failed; though we worship and adore you, sometimes love has not prevailed. Tempers racing, devil chasing, hearts estranged by ice or flame You transform by ways for giving. Grace amazing! Grace, your name!
4. By your Spirit of creation keep us bold for risking still, eager in anticipation, ever strong to do your will. Bind us close to one another, sharing life and death and birth, Welcoming as sister, brother, all your children on the earth.

Words G.I.A. Publications, Inc., 1992.

## Benediction

## Sending Music

