



First Congregational United Church of Christ January 7, 2024



Photo by Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona

Sunday after Epiphany

Partners in Ministry: **All who are a part of this church**

Pastor: **Rev. Enno K. Limvere**

Musician: **Ben Nichols** Choir Director: **Ann Russ**

Peace Poem: **Sandy Stover** Liturgist: **Jodi Yuhasey**

Greeter: **Jodi Yuhasey** Usher: **Gwen Mattice**

Coffee-Hour Host: **Borealis Cookies**

Gathering Music
Words of Welcome
Prelude

Words to Enter Worship (Based on Psalm 103)

One: Bless the LORD, my soul! All that is in me, bless God's holy name! Bless the LORD, my soul, and remember all God's kindness!

Many: How you love justice, O LORD! You are always on the side of the oppressed. You revealed your intentions to Moses, your deeds to Israel.

One: You are tender and compassionate, O LORD – slow to anger and always loving; your indignation doesn't endure forever, and your anger lasts only for a short time.

Many: As far away as the east is from the west, that's how far you remove our sins from us! As tenderly as parents treat their children, that's how tenderly you treat worshippers, O LORD!

Opening Hymn #154 Go Tell It on the Mountain ([click here](#))

Words of Lament

Merciful God, we are often a messed-up people. We pay attention to who we are for and against rather than the actions of what is justice and what is greed. We too quickly excuse the bad deeds of those we like and give no grace to those deeds of those we don't. God of Wisdom, help us examine our own hearts and motives, so we may better witness your love and grace. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Time of Silence

Blessing the Earth

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 peacemakers as a Just Peace Church.

Foolishness by Rev. Enno K. Limvere

Hold my beer, begins a tragic story or TikTok post,
I am about to do something stupid, so the views can be the most.
Jumping from the roof, or crashing in a car,
I sacrifice my body, in hopes of being a star.
What is in us, that craves to have fame?
Is it really, we just believe, that life is lame?
What is more foolish, can we try to imagine,
that things inside us matter more, than winning a beauty pageant?

Others strive for the life, of safety and security,
Having enough for whatever may come.
They don't want highs or lows, or bumps in the road,
They want blessed quiet, to be blissfully numb.
They wait until all is ready,
they wait until all is rest.
Circumstances have to be perfect,
In order to do our best.

Life doesn't have a schedule, life just fools around.
We tell God our plans, God shows us we're the clown.
God laughs, God weeps, God cheers,
Invites us to do the same.
We can be fools for Christ,
Poor in spirit, pure in heart, peacemakers,
is our name.

Passing of the Peace

Hymn #1 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise ([click here](#))

First Scripture 1st Corinthians 1:18-31 (New Revised Standard Version UE)

18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21** For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation, to save those who believe. **22** For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom, **23** but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles, **24** but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

26 Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. **27** But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; **28** God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to abolish things that are, **29** so that no one might boast in the presence of God. **30** In contrast, God is why you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, **31** in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Second Scripture Mark 2:1-22 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation)

1 Jesus came back to Capernaum after several days, and word spread that he was home. **2** People began to gather in such great numbers that there was no longer any room for them, even around the door.

While Jesus was delivering God’s word to them, **3** some people arrived bringing a paralyzed person. The four who had carried the invalid **4** were unable to reach Jesus because of the crowd, so they began to open up the roof directly above Jesus. When they had made a hole, they lowered the mat on which the paralyzed one was lying. **5** When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the sufferer, “My child, your sins are forgiven.” **6** Now some of the religious scholars were sitting there asking themselves, **7** “Why does Jesus talk in that way? He commits blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

8 Jesus immediately perceived in his spirit that they reasoned this way among themselves and said to them, “Why do you harbor such thoughts? **9** Which is easier, to say to this paralyzed person, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say ‘Stand up, pick up your mat and walk’? **10** But so that you all may know that the Promised One has authority on earth to forgive sins –” Jesus then turned to the paralyzed person – **11** “I tell you, stand up! Pick up your mat and go home.”

12 The paralyzed person stood up, picked up the mat and walked outside in the sight of everyone. They were awe-struck, and they all gave praise to God and said, “We have never seen anything like this!”

13 Jesus went out again and walked along the lake shore, but people kept coming to him in crowds to listen to his teachings. **14** As he passed by, Jesus saw Levi, ben-Alphaeus, sitting in the tax office. Jesus said, “Follow me, “and Levi got up and followed him.

15 While Jesus was reclining to eat in Levi’s house, many other tax collectors and notorious ‘sinners’ joined him and the disciples at dinner. There were many people following Jesus. **16** When religious scholars who belonged to the Pharisee sect saw that he was eating with tax collectors and sinners, they complained to the disciples, “Why does the Teacher eat with these people?”

17 Overhearing the remark, Jesus said to them, “People who are healthy don’t need a doctor, sick ones do. I have come to call sinners, not the righteous.”

18 Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees fasted regularly. Some people came to Jesus with the objection, “Why do John’s disciples and those of the Pharisees fast, while yours don’t?”

19 Jesus replied, “How can wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is still among them? So long as the bridegroom stays with them, they cannot fast. **20** The day will come, however, when the bridegroom will be taken away, on that day they will fast.”

21 “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak. Otherwise, the patch pulls away from it – the new from the old – and the tear gets worse. **22** Similarly, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If one does, the wine will burst the skins, and both wine and skins will be lost. No, new wine is poured into new wineskins.”

Children’s Message Helping a Friend

Choir Anthem

Message Hold My Bible...

Musical Reflections

Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, Mother God, you are in heaven, holy is 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours 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 God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, for all that love has done.
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen*

Closing Hymn #495 Called as Partners in Christ’s Service ([click here](#))

Benediction

Sending Music



Opening Hymn #154 **Go Tell It on the Mountain**

Go tell it on the mountain,
over the the hill and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain,
that Jesus Christ is born!

1. While shepherds kept their watching,
o'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light.
2. The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo! above the earth
Rand out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth.
3. Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn.

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*African-American spiritual
Arr. John W. Work II, 1907.
Adapt. Joyce Finch Johnson, 1992
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Hymn #1 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

1. Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, your great name we praise.

2. Un-resting, un-hasting, and silent as light,
not wanting, not wasting, but ruling in might;
Your justice like mountains high soaring above,
your clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

3. Your life is life giving- to both great and small;
in all life you're living, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves and as flowers,
then wither and perish- but naught dims your powers.

4. So perfect your glory, so brilliant your light,
your angels adore you, all veiling their sight;
All praise we now render as your angels do:
in awe at the splendor of light hiding you.

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*Words, Walter C. Smith, 1867; alt.
Tune, Adapt. from a Welsh ballad in John Roberts'
Caniadaeth y Cysegr, 1839
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Closing Hymn #495 **Called as Partners in Christ's Service**

1. Called as partners in Christ's service, called to ministries of grace
We respond with deep commitment fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing, side by side and friend with friend,
Equal partners in our caring to fulfill God's chosen end.
2. Christ's example, Christ's inspiring, Christ's clear call to work and worth,
Let us follow, never faltering, reconciling folk on earth.
Men and women, richer, poorer, all God's people, young and old,
Blending human skills together gracious gifts from God unfold.
3. Thus new patterns for Christ's mission, in a small or global sense,
Help us bear each other's burdens, breaking down each wall or fence.
Words of comfort, words of vision, words of challenge, said with care,
Bring new power and strength for action, make us colleagues, free and fair.
4. So God grant us for tomorrow ways to order human life
That surround each person's sorrow with a calm that conquers strife.
Make us partners in our living, our compassion to increase,
Messengers of faith, thus giving hope and confidence and peace.

Words, Jane Parker Huber, Copyright 1981

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Tune, John Zundel, 1855

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