

First Congregational United Church of Christ

May 7, 2023



Stephen Feeding the Poor by Frank Wesley

4th Sunday of Easter

Ministers: All who are a part of this church

Pastor: Rev. Enno K. Limvere

Musician: Karina Roth

Choir Director: Ann Russ

Peace Candle Lighter:

Liturgist:

Gathering Music

Words of Welcome

Prelude

Words to Enter Worship (Based on Beatitudes)

People who bless: **Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.**

People who love: **Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**

People who forgive: **Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.**

People who do justice: **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.**

Words of Lament

God of the poor, the meek, and the peacemakers, there are too many who are hurting, who are enraged, who are filled with pain and anger and fear... God of mercy, transform our hearts and lives, so we may be filled with love and mercy, so we may be salt and light, so we may be present with those who are seeking a better way. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Time of Silence

Blessing of the Earth: Blessing for the Cosmic Whole by Rev. Molly Bolton

One: May you, in some altered state of sleeplessness or psychedelics or come-to-the-edge coming apart, access a cosmic view of the whole: span of

Many: sapiens, a sweep of your broom on the back stoop. Empires rising and falling like breath and your life: a flash of sunlight reflected in a hummingbird's ruby throat.

All: A cicada grows for seventeen years underground so it can sing for two days. The Appalachians were as tall as the Alps before they softened into bosoms.

One: This singular morning, raspberries melt magenta in your oatmeal, honeysuckle hooks to the chain link fence, and you, stubbornly refuse to add to your suffering.

Many: When you sit waiting for your beloved who is making you late for dinner, may you have the fortitude to break the quiet by cueing up their favorite song. May we drink

All: the jolt of pleasure that comes from remembering we are alive, soft sheets of moss supping from the same rock.

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.

Forgiveness by Melvina Germain

Forgiveness, a heartfelt decision.

The clearing of one's heart without remission.

A voice from deep within, contemplates,
removal of festered thoughts of sin.

Forgiveness, allowing positive energy to prevail.

Wiping out all negativity along the trail.

Forcing out emotions of darkness deep.

Keeping straight, a good night's sleep.

Passing of the Peace

Hymn #438 When Peace, Like a River

Scripture Readings

1st Scripture John 14:1-14 (The Message)

14 ¹⁻⁴ "Don't let this rattle you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I'm on my way to get your room ready, I'll come back and get you so you can live where I live. And you already know the road I'm taking."

⁵ Thomas said, "Master, we have no idea where you're going. How do you expect us to know the road?"

⁶⁻⁷ Jesus said, "I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him. You've even seen him!"

⁸ Philip said, "Master, show us the Father; then we'll be content."

⁹⁻¹⁰ "You've been with me all this time, Philip, and you still don't understand? To see me is to see the Father. So how can you ask, 'Where is the Father?' Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you aren't mere words. I don't just make them up on my own. The Father who resides in me crafts each word into a divine act.

¹¹⁻¹⁴ "Believe me: I am in my Father and my Father is in me. If you can't believe that, believe what you see—these works. The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing. You can count on it. From now on, whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing, I'll do it. That's how the Father will be seen for who he is in the Son. I mean it. Whatever you request in this way, I'll do.

2nd Scripture Acts 7:55-60 (New Revised Standard Version Update Catholic Edition)

⁵⁵ But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” ⁵⁷ But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸ Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

Children’s Message Standing Up

Choir **“Oh the Winter Soon be Over”**

Message Do not hold this sin against them...

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 God, all creatures here below;

Alleluia, alleluia

Praise God for all that love has done;

Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Closing Hymn #17 To You, O God, All Creatures Sing

Benediction

Sending Music