

First Congregational United Church of Christ
“Where No One Is a Stranger”
Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost
October 31, 2021

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE BELL

GREETINGS, GOOD NEWS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, JESUS ENCOUNTERS

*CALL TO WORSHIP

(read responsively)

One: Come into the land of God.

Many: We come seeking the land of love.

One: Live as the people of Jesus.

Many: We gather to grow as a community of love.

One: Follow in the ways of Jesus.

Many: We move forward on the path of love.

One: Come, young and old, friend and foreigner, for all are welcome here.

Many: We come to live and grow in the love of Jesus. Praise God for this wonderful gift!

*OPENING SONG

“O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing”

#96

*OPENING PRAYER

(prayed together)

God, you are our God, and we come as your people on earth. Gather us in, that we may remember the ties that bind us together in your love. Write your love upon our hearts, that others may find us to be generous and loving friends. Strengthen us by your Spirit, that we may live in love—a love that transforms our lives, even as we help to transform the lives of others. In the hope of your miraculous love, we pray. Amen.

TIME FOR THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG AT HEART

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

(prayed together)

We are hesitant to confess, Holy God, how hard it is to love as you wish. It is easy to love you with all that we are, except when you ask us to love our neighbor with all that we have. We find it hard to love our neighbor, when it is linked to the way we love ourselves. And it is difficult to love anyone - even You - more than we love ourselves. Forgive us, Love Eternal. As you took a risk in creating us, help us to take risks to love others compassionately, to love ourselves genuinely, and to love you as completely as you love us in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

SILENCE FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

(read responsively)

One: In God's Realm, all are loved for who they are, not what they do; in God's Realm, all are forgiven for what they do, and don't; in God's Realm, all are welcomed and fed by God's grace and hope.

Many: Forgiven, loved, sent forth - we are not far from God's Realm! Thanks be to God. Amen.

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 141:1-10

*AN AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

(read together)

We believe in God, who is love, whose love is manifest in all Creation, in our lives, and in all people.

We follow Christ, who embodied God's love. In his life and ministry, his death and resurrection, and his granting to us of his Spirit, he filled us with that love as well.

We live by the Spirit, the presence of God's love in us. In that love we participate in the Church, Body of Christ, in loving God by loving our neighbors through our prayers, our presence, our gifts and our service.

Love is our faith, and it is a gift from God. We thank God, and ask God's blessings, that we may love in the name of Christ and the power of the Spirit, to God's glory. Amen.

*GLORIA PATRI

#734

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Mark 12:28-34

read from *The Message*

MESSAGE:

“So Near, Yet So Far”

Pastor Chris

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE/THE LORD'S PRAYER

BRINGING OUR GIFTS

OFFERTORY

*DOXOLOGY

Words #44

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

(prayed together)

Receive from us, God the best we have to give for all we have comes from you. We offer our gifts with joy that they may go towards accomplishing the work we intend to do together in your name. We offer ourselves as well, to be blessed by you, so that while we are apart our words and deeds will continue to be a significant offering. May everything we do praise you! Amen.

