

First Congregational Church
Our Church in Worship

April 28, 2024 10:00 AM

Fifth Sunday of Easter

PRELUDE *Jesus, Lead Thou On* – Max Reger Adam Peithmann

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS Rev. Barbara Papagian

*OPENING HYMN NO. 110 *You Servants of God*

CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive) Rev. Barbara Papagian

Leader: Come gather together here in the presence of Christ, who is our friend and healer.

People: We have entered here, and in our worship together, we yearn for hope and comfort.

Leader: Let us reach to the heart of Jesus, who is our life.

People: We encounter our Lord, who makes us whole.

Leader: Here we are welcome and loved and cherished.

All: Here we are the people of God. Let us rejoice and give God praise.

OPENING PRAYER (Unison) Rev. Christopher Stevens

Holy God, weave praise into the fabric of our days so our lives become a blessing to others.

Weave peace into our words and deeds so hatred and anger are disarmed.

Weave love into our work so accomplishments are imbued with humility.

Weave kindness into our actions so the world becomes a joyous place to live.

Weave hope into every encounter so we may testify to God's continuing resurrection.

Weave songs into our worship so our morning might echo in praise to God. Amen.

MUSICAL OFFERING *Holy Ground* – Geron Davis Bridget Thornton-Smith, soloist

As I walked through the door, I sense his presence; And I knew this was the place where love abounds. For this is the temple, Jehovah God abides here; And we are standing in His presence on holy ground.

Refrain: We are standing on holy ground; and I know that there are angels all around. Let us praise Jesus now, we are standing in His presence on holy ground.

In his presence there is joy beyond all measure; and at His feet, peace of mind can still be found.

If you have the need, I know He has the answer. Reach out and claim it; you are standing on holy ground. (Refrain)

Those involved with Sunday Friends may leave for their activity.

PASTORAL PRAYER Rev. Barbara Papagian

OUR PRAYER CONCERNS

SILENT MEDITATION

OUR LORD'S PRAYER (Unison)

Our Father 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

HYMN NO. 530 *I've Got Peace Like a River*

OUR MORNING OFFERING Rev. Barbara Papagian

OFFERTORY MUSIC *Majesty* – Jack W. Hayford

Majesty, worship his majesty Unto Jesus be all glory, honor and praise. Majesty, kingdom authority flows from His throne unto His own His anthem raise. So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus the King. Majesty, worship his majesty Jesus, who died, now glorified King of all King.

*DOXOLOGY (Hymn No. 46)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION (Unison) Rev. Barbara Papagian

Gracious God, you have blessed us with so much. With grateful hearts, we offer not only the fruits of our financial resources, but ourselves as well. It is our fervent hope that you would use both the money and the talents you have blessed us with to bring your light and Word to those who need it most. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS Acts 8:26-40; Ecclesiastes 2:9-11; Romans 8:38-39 Elizabeth Blood

SERMON *So, What's Stopping You?* Rev. Christopher Stevens

*CLOSING HYMN NO. 337 *Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult*

BENEDICTION Rev. Christopher Stevens

POSTLUDE *Short Intermezzo* – H. Schroeder

*You are invited to stand if you wish.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Acts 8:26-40

²⁶ An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. The angel said, “Get ready and go south on the road that leads down to Gaza from Jerusalem—the road that goes through the desert.” ²⁷ So Philip got ready and went. On the road he saw a man from Ethiopia. He was a eunuch and an important official in the service of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. He was responsible for taking care of all her money. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸ Now he was on his way home. He was sitting in his chariot reading from the book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit said to Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” ³⁰ So he went toward the chariot, and he heard the man reading from Isaiah the prophet. Philip asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹ The man answered, “How can I understand? I need someone to explain it to me.” Then he invited Philip to climb in and sit with him. ³² The part of the Scriptures that he was reading was this:

“He was like a sheep being led to the butcher.

He was like a lamb that makes no sound as its wool is being cut off.

He said nothing.

³³ He was shamed, and all his rights were taken away.

His life on earth has ended.

So there will be no story about his descendants.”

³⁴ The official said to Philip, “Please, tell me, who is the prophet talking about? Is he talking about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵ Philip began to speak. He started with this same Scripture and told the man the Good News about Jesus. ³⁶ While they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The official said, “Look, here is water! What is stopping me from being baptized?” ³⁷ ³⁸ Then the official ordered the chariot to stop. Both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away; the official never saw him again. The official continued on his way home. He was very happy. ⁴⁰ But Philip appeared in a city called Azotus. He was going to the city of Caesarea. He told people the Good News in all the towns on the way from Azotus to Caesarea.

Ecclesiastes 2:9-11

⁹ So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me... ¹¹ But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

Romans 8:38-39

³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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April 28, 2024

**Manchester, New Hampshire
United Church of Christ**

508 Union Street · Manchester, NH · 603-625-5093

Sunday Worship 10:00 AM

You are welcome here! An Open & Affirming Congregation