

First Congregational Church
Our Church in Worship

September 8, 2024 10:00 AM

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

PRELUDE *Gospel Fancy* – P. Hall/Transcr. R. Henry Adam Peithmann

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS Rev. Christopher Stevens

*OPENING HYMN NO. 475 *The Church of Christ in Every Age*

CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive)

Leader: Do not deny justice to your poor. (Exodus 23:6)

People: As one gives freely, yet gains even more, another withholds unduly but comes to poverty. (Proverbs 11:24)

Leader: O that we would be so rich in you, O Lord, that the blessings bestowed upon us would freely flow.

All: Touch all in need around us in the everyday ordinariness of our walk with you.

OPENING PRAYER (Unison)

O God, conform us to the likeness of your Son, Jesus Christ. We know that he was patient, full of love, and never selfish. We know that he cared for the poor and broken, and he welcomed the least of these into his arms. We know that he was one with you, that he always made time for prayer. We know that he knew the Scriptures and was always proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. God, we desire to be like Jesus. Form us and mold us, so that the world will see him in us. Amen.

MUSICAL OFFERING *With a Voice of Singing* – Martin Shaw Chancel Choir
With a voice of singing declare ye this, and let it be heard, Alleluia. Utter it even unto the ends of the earth. The Lord hath delivered his people, Alleluia. O be joyful in God, all ye lands, O sing praises to the honor of his name, make his praise to be glorious.

Those involved with Sunday Friends may leave for their activity.

PASTORAL PRAYER

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. 687 *In Christ There Is No East or West*

OUR MORNING OFFERING

OFFERTORY MUSIC

*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) (Based on *Mark 7:24-37*)

Healing One, we are reminded so often in Biblical narration that you are capable of miraculous actions. We recall those many miracles that have touched people within our own congregation. We are astounded by those miracles that we witness each day. We are so thankful! Today, we offer you this money as a sacred gesture of our gratitude. All praise and honor be given to you! Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING James 2:1-8 Lisa Allen

SERMON *God's Got Friends In Low Places (And We Should Too)* Rev. Christopher Stevens

*CLOSING HYMN NO. 668 *For the Healing of the Nations*

BENEDICTION

People of God, be beautiful. Love well and serve all. Speak gently and listen carefully. Let the mind of Christ be ever guiding you so that your lives may bring glory to God. Go now and do the work of God. In the name of God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

POSTLUDE *Fugue in G BWV 550* – J. S. Bach

*You are invited to stand if you wish.

SCRIPTURE READING

James 2:1-8 (New Living Translation)

My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others? ² For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. ³ If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, “You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor”—well, ⁴ doesn’t this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives? ⁵ Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn’t God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren’t they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you dishonor the poor! Isn’t it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? ⁷ Aren’t they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear? ⁸ Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

James 2:9, 14-18 (New Living Translation) ⁹ But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law... ¹⁴ What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? ¹⁵ Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, ¹⁶ and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? ¹⁷ So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. ¹⁸ Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.”

Luke 6:20b “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Luke 6:32-36 (New Living Translation) ³² “If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! ³³ And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! ³⁴ And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return. ³⁵ “Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.

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**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