

# *The First Congregational Church in Worcester*

*Sunday, March 30, 2025*

*10:00A.M.*

*Fourth Sunday in Lent*

*The service of worship begins with the music of the prelude. Through its power and brilliance, may you feel the majesty and glory of God; in its quietness, God's peace.*

## Prelude

*Adagio ~ Albinoni*

## Ringing of the Chimes

### \*Call to Worship

A new day has dawned, God's gift to us;  
the fruits of the land are ours to enjoy.

**We are a new creation in Jesus Christ;  
the old has passed away, the new has come.**

This is a day for forgiveness and reconciliation;  
celebrate God's love for the lost who are found.

**The glad cries of deliverance surround us;  
shouts of joy arise from our hearts.**

Let all who are faithful offer up prayers;  
may all who are in Christ give thanks.

**We will be glad and join the dance of life;  
with the upright of heart, we rejoice and sing.**

### \*Opening Hymn Insert

*Living for Jesus*

Living for Jesus, a life that is true, striving to please Him in all that I do;  
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free, this is the pathway of blessing for me.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,  
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me;  
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne;  
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

Living for Jesus Who died in my place, bearing on Calv'ry my sin and disgrace;  
Such love constrains me to answer His call, follow His leading and give Him my all.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,  
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me;  
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne;  
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

Living for Jesus, wherever I am, doing each duty in His holy Name;  
Willing to suffer affliction and loss, deeming each trial a part of my cross.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,  
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me;  
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne;  
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

Living for Jesus through earth's little while, my dearest treasure, the light of His smile;  
Seeking the lost ones He died to redeem, bringing the weary to find rest in Him.  
O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee,  
For Thou, in Thy atonement, didst give Thyself for me;  
I own no other Master, my heart shall be Thy throne;  
My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

### **\*Invocation**

**Welcoming God, we have gathered together so that you may teach us the way we should go. In our times of distress and need, you have provided. When we have stubbornly followed our own plans, you have curbed our impulses. From our days of confusion and aimless wandering, you have rescued us and restored us to our true identity. Meet us now as we worship together to shape us into a righteous, reconciling people. Amen.**

### **Call to Transformation**

We pause to consider how far we may have wandered from our home with God. Are we sometimes like a horse or mule whose temper must be curbed? Have we turned away from responsibility in order to seek shallow pleasures and selfish gratification? Or do we consider ourselves above reproach, looking down on those mired in the pigpens of life? Wherever we are, whoever we are, there is much to confess.

### **Prayer of Transformation**

**O God, we will not try to hide from you the wrong we have done or the good we have neglected. You know our transgressions. You have observed our pretensions. We have claimed too lightly the label "Christian," for often we cut ourselves off from you and from people we disdain. At times our rebellion leaves us hungry, alone, and friendless. O God, we are not worthy to be called your children. Grant us, we pray, your forgiveness and pardon and a renewed sense of who you intend us to be and to become. Amen.**

### **Prayer of Grace**

We are assured that God forgives the guilt of our sin. Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom God imputes no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit. Rejoice, for God has brought us back to life!

### **Sharing of Announcements, Celebrations and Concerns**

### **Prayer of the Day**

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

**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.**

### **Prayer Response**

*O Lord, Hear My Prayer*

**O Lord, hear my prayer. O Lord, hear my prayer,  
When I call, answer me. O Lord hear my prayer.**

O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and listen to me.

Hebrew Scripture Reading

*Psalm 32*

New Testament Reading

*II Corinthians 5:16-21*

Gospel Reading

*Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52*

Sermon Title

The Kingdom of God in Weird Places

*Rev. Noelle Dattilo*

\*Hymn Insert

*Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*

Alas! And did my Savior bleed, and did my Sovereign die!

Would he devote that sacred head for sinners such as I!

Was it for sins that I have done he suffered on the tree?

Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut its glories in,  
when Christ, the great Redeemer, died for human creatures' sin.

But drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe;  
here, Lord, I give myself away; 'tis all that I can do.

Invitation to Generosity

We have been granted more than our share of the world's wealth. Often, we have forgotten the source of our bounty. We grasp and spend as if all were ours to indulge our desires. This is the time to reexamine our management of what is really God's property, entrusted to us for a little while.

Offertory

*Were You There ~ McDonald*

\*Doxology

Beecher

**Blest by Thee with gifts and graces, may we heed Thy churches call;**

**Gladly in all times and places give to Thee who giv'est all.**

**Thou hast brought us, and no longer can we claim to be our own.**

**Ever free and ever stronger, we shall serve Thee, Lord alone.**

\*Prayer of Dedication

**Thank you, God, for proclaiming our worth when we do not value ourselves. Thank you for welcoming us to a celebration of life with so many precious gifts. Thank you now for the privilege of sharing so others may be led to your joyous embrace. Help us to be generous in gratitude for your lavish provision for all our needs. Amen.**

\*Sending Hymn

*What Wondrous Love is This?*

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss

To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul, to bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing; to God and to the Lamb, I will sing.  
To God and to the Lamb who is the great I Am;  
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing; while millions join the theme, I will sing.

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and when from death I'm free, I'll sing on.  
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be;  
And through eternity, I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and through eternity, I'll sing on.

**\*Commission & Blessing**

Stay near to God during the week that lies ahead;  
be faithful in your times of prayer.

**God is our hiding place and present help;  
we will speak to God and for God this week.**

Live as ambassadors of Jesus Christ every day;  
rejoice when a sister or brother returns home to God.

**We will seek to love as we have been loved;  
we will welcome, not judge, our brothers and sisters.**

We have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ;  
God's love and compassion will be with us always.

**We will be glad and rejoice in God's goodness;  
we will share the joy of God's love.**

Amen. Amen.

**\*Benediction Response**

*New Britain*

Depart in peace to do God's will, walk ever in the light;  
For Christ is with you ever more, to guide your day and night.

**Ringing of the Chimes**

**\*Postlude**

Throned Upon the Awful Tree ~ Leatherman

**\* - Please stand in body or spirit**

*All are welcome to join us at Coffee Hour in the parlor immediately following the service.*

Let us again extend a warm welcome to **Rev. Noelle Dattilo**, who is officiating at our service today.