

The First Congregational Church in Worcester

Sunday, May 18, 2025

10:00A.M.

Fifth Sunday of Easter

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

Prelude I ~ Oldroyd

Ringing of the Chimes

*Call to Worship

Come to praise God, all you faithful people!

Come, for God welcomes you and offers to draw close.

Praise to God, who rules over all the earth.

Praise to God, who is as near as our next breath.

Sun and moon and stars shine in praise to God.

God created them and established for each a place.

God has a place for us in this world;

we have come that God may instruct and equip us.

Mountains and hills, trees and animals praise God.

Let all the rulers of the earth do so as well.

God provides abundantly for our needs.

God makes of one family all who dwell on earth.

*Opening Hymn #15

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation!

Come, all who hear; now to his temple draw near, join me in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, above all things so wondrously reigning;

sheltering you under his wings, and so gently sustaining!

Have you not seen all that is needful has been sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;

surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.

Ponder anew what the Almighty can do, if with his love he befriends you.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!

All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.

Let the Amen sound from his people again; gladly forever adore him.

*Invocation

We praise you, O God, and celebrate your presence with us. Your glory fills all heaven and earth, all time and space. Your gifts surround us and dwell within us. We are your children. Come to wipe away our tears and comfort us in our distress. Come to heal our divisions and overcome our prejudices. Come, that we might be loved into discipleship. Amen.

Call to Transformation

The God revealed to us in the pages of Scripture is a welcoming and inclusive God who directs us to love one another. So we gather to seek removal of all barriers to that love. Come to confess all that separates you from others and from your own best.

Prayer of Transformation

We admit, holy God, that we find it hard to hear your promise of new life. Even when we are dissatisfied with our lives, it is easier to cling to what we know than to risk the unknown. You challenge us to accept people who are different from us, but we are not eager' to associate with them. You command us to love one another, but some people are not lovable. O God, melt our defenses so we can accept your love and let it flow through us. Grant us courage to embrace newness. Amen.

Prayer of Grace

God promises to dwell with us, to ease our pain and wipe tears from our eyes. Dare to trust, for God accepts us as we are, that we might become all we are meant to be. God grants us the opportunity to repent. It is a gift that leads to new life. Accept God's offer of new life in Christ.

Sharing of Announcements, Celebrations and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

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 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.

Prayer Response

Into My Heart

Into my heart, into my heart, come into my heart, Lord Jesus;
come in today, come in to stay; come into my heart, Lord Jesus.

New Testament Reading

*Acts 11 : 1-18
Revelation 21: 1-6*

Sermon

"Imagine"

Rev. Linda Michel

***Hymn Insert**

Jesus Loves Me

Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong; they are weak, but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! This I know, as He loved so long ago,
Taking children on His knee, saying, "Let them come to Me."
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me still today, walking with me on my way,
Wanting as a friend to give light and love to all who live.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

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Invitation to Generosity

God has called us to a ministry of service: water for the thirsty, comfort to those who grieve, healing for ones in pain, acceptance for persons who have not accepted themselves. This is the time to offer our time and strength as well as money, that God's will may be realized among us.

Offertory

Prelude II ~ Oldroyd

***Doxology**

Lasst Uns Erfreuen

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia

***Prayer of Dedication**

Thank you, gracious God, for making your home with us and claiming us as your own people. We dedicate ourselves and our gifts toward the new world you are creating among us - a world where peace emerges from mutual respect and honest encounters. May your love be reflected in our attitudes and actions when we are together and when we are scattered. Amen.

***Sending Hymn Insert**

Go Forth for God

Go forth for God, go to the world in peace; be of good courage, armed with heavenly grace,
in God's good Spirit, daily to increase, till in the kingdom we see face to face.
Go forth for God, go to the world in peace.

Go forth for God, go to the world in love; strengthen the faint, give courage to the weak;
help the afflicted; richly from above God's love supplies the grace and power we seek.
Go forth for God, go to the world in love.

Go forth for God, go to the world in strength; hold fast the good, be urgent for the right;
render to no one evil; Christ at length shall overcome all darkness with his light.
Go forth for God, go to the world in strength.

Go forth for God, go to the world in joy, to serve God's people every day and hour,
and serving Christ, our every gift employ, rejoicing in the Holy Spirit's power.
Go forth for God, go to the world in joy.

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***Commission & Blessing**

We go out as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The world will recognize you by your love.

Love has created us and makes us whole.

We grow in love when we share love.

Praise God whose abundant mercies meet our needs.

Commune daily with the one who heads our family.

When we know God's presence, we are unafraid.

Newness is welcomed as God's gift to us.

God is Alpha and Omega, beginning and end.

God refreshes us daily with the gift of living water.

We have been baptized with water and the Holy Spirit.

We are ambassadors of love to all we meet.

Amen. **Amen.**

***Benediction Response**

Hymn to Joy

Alleluia, alleluia! Hearts to heaven and voices raise:
sing to God a hymn of gladness, sing to God a hymn of praise.
He, who on the cross a victim, for the world's salvation bled,
Jesus Christ, the King of glory, now is risen from the dead.

Ringling of the Chimes

***Postlude**

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee ~ arr. Hustad

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

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

Let us extend a warm welcome to **Rev. Linda Michel**, who is officiating at our service today.