

**Trinitarian Congregational Church**  
**TAKE OUT**  
**August 16, 2020**

**Call to Worship**

Come worship God whose love is revealed in Jesus Christ.  
Let the message of peace reach the whole world.

**We rejoice in the gift of God's mercy and grace.**

**We seek to grow in faith and service.**

Christ is the foundation and source of our life and love.  
Let us live as disciples, living steadily and deeply with him.

**We rejoice in the gift of God's mercy and grace.**

**We seek to grow in faith and service.**

We are at home in God's presence and among God's people.  
Let us bear witness to God's all-embracing Spirit.

**We rejoice in the gift of God's mercy and grace.**

**We seek to grow in faith and service.**

**Hymn:** Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee Henry J. Van Dyke

[Audio - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msync6xr\\_CaE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msync6xr_CaE)]

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee  
God of glory, Lord of love  
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before Thee  
Op'ning to the Sun above  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness  
drive the dark of doubt away  
Giver of immortal gladness  
fill us with the light of day

2. All Thy works with joy surround Thee  
Earth and heav'n reflect Thy rays  
Stars and angels sing around Thee  
center of unbroken praise  
Field and forest, vale and mountain  
Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea  
chanting bird and flowing fountain  
call us to rejoice in Thee

3. Thou art giving and forgiving  
ever blessing, ever blest  
well-spring of the joy of living  
ocean-depth of happy rest  
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother—  
all who live in love are Thine  
Teach us how to love each other  
lift us to the Joy Divine

4. Mortals join the happy chorus  
which the morning stars began  
Father love is reigning o'er us  
brother love binds man to man.  
Ever singing, march we onward  
victors in the midst of strife  
joyful music lifts us sunward  
in the triumph song of life

**Gathering Prayer**

Loving God, today we celebrate your presence with us and your purpose for us. May our senses be opened to your grace and our spirits to your direction. May we be renewed by the good news of your love. While we long to find our abiding place in Christ, we find genuine

discipleship to be challenging. As we hear the call to bear fruit in Christ, our own needs and plans are confronted. When we seek to be led by your Spirit, we struggle to follow her prompting. O God, as we draw near to you today free us to live out the fullness of your grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gloria Patri [Audio - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>]

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost  
As it was in the beginning, Is now and ever shall be,  
World without end, Amen, Amen.

## Scriptures

1 John 4:7-21

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

<sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. <sup>16</sup> So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. <sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. <sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup> Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup> The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Psalm 84:1-7

<sup>1</sup> How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O LORD of hosts!

<sup>2</sup> My soul longs, indeed it faints  
for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.

<sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,

at your altars, O LORD of hosts,  
my King and my God.  
<sup>4</sup>Happy are those who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise.*Selah*  
<sup>5</sup>Happy are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.<sup>[a]</sup>  
<sup>6</sup>As they go through the valley of Baca  
they make it a place of springs;  
the early rain also covers it with pools.  
<sup>7</sup>They go from strength to strength;  
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

John 15:1-8

<sup>1</sup> “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. <sup>2</sup> He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

**Sermon**

Abide and Bear  
John 15:1-8

Foster St., South Windsor CT; Mansfield Ave., Burlington VT; 149th St., Kansas City, MO;  
Elm St., Houlton ME; Second St., Millville PA; Carriage Lane, Barkhamsted CT; Hayden Hill  
Rd, Torrington CT; Monroe St, Agawam Ma

If any of you are curious about all those addresses - they have, at one time or another been my abode. They were the places I have called home. Each of those addresses have been special to me because they are the places I have lived. And they have left their impressions my life. Home is important to each of us, regardless of where that home is.

Home is the place where we find life, where we find what we need so that we can then go out into the world to work and labor. Home is the place we go to find rest and renewal and peace. Homes is a place of relationships, where those who call a place home live and love, support and care for one another, and work together for their common good. ‘Home’ is a wonderful image to carry with us as we read today’s gospel.

Jesus tells his disciples, “Abide in me.” Those words may sound a bit strange, but actually it is the verbal form of ‘abode’. Jesus is inviting us to find our home with him. Jesus is our resting place, our center, our life partner and lover. Isn’t that comforting!

Jesus’ words are a warm welcome for all of us. We are encouraged to be in a personal relationship to Christ; one in which we can be genuine and open, and in which we will find our hope and help. Who wouldn’t want that! That is the heart of the gospel. It is the good news of salvation; that we can be in a loving, caring relationship with God, through Jesus Christ.

And for most us we are happy to stop right there and enjoy it. I know I am tempted to do that. But there is more to abiding than that. If we stop with the comforting words, we miss the flip side of Jesus’ message. In fact, Jesus does not use the image of a home in this passage, although I guess he could; there are plenty of other places in the Bible that would promote such an idea. But here Jesus focuses on a totally different image of abiding. “I am the vine and my father is the vine grower... I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them, will bear much fruit...”

Instead of using a static image of a house, Jesus uses the organic image of a garden; like the way plants live in the ground, or branches live on a tree. There is more intensity and less comfort in these words. Abiding in this sense is not flexible and optional like changing addresses. Abiding, like a branch on a vine is critical because there is the reality that if you get disconnected, your dead. That, it seems, would be obvious. Just like a body can’t survive without its vital organs neither can we, the church, without our vital heart – Jesus Christ.

Jesus wants us to be vitally connected with him, to live with him in a deep life-giving relationship. In fact, in his mind it is absolutely crucial. But there is something else. Jesus also expects us to live for him. Jesus expects our relationship to him to affect our relationship to his world. In other words - his call becomes our call. Receiving his life means bearing his life. It is like an apple tree bearing apples, or vines bearing grapes. They just go together. Fruit bearing is so central to abiding and abiding so central to fruit bearing that Jesus insists that unless we abide in him, unless we are organically connected to him in an intimate relationship of love and labor we will not be able, in any way, to bear the fruit God desires.

It even seems that God is willing go to the extreme to make it happen. Jesus doesn’t mince his words, rather he openly speaks to us about pruning, and being thrown away, and withering, of being thrown into the fire and burned. That part of this passage we really don’t want to hear, because it is frightening and sobering. But, abiding is about more than feeling good, it is about ‘bearing fruit, it’s about being effective in the mission of Jesus, in his ministry to the world. To bear the fruit of God is a natural part of being a branch attached to Christ, the vine. But to have a good crop it is necessary for the farmer to prune his vines.

Those of us who enjoy gardening, know all about the work it involves, whether we begin with planting seeds, or hauling off to the local nursery for bedding plants, or tending the shoots emerging from winter soil. We know that just because we want something to grow doesn’t guarantee that it will. We know that getting our roses to bloom means cutting back the canes; that encouraging the growth of tomato plants means pinching off the gangly stems; that getting a

second bloom from the impatiens, or the pansies, or zinnias, means cutting back the early flowers – or dead heading. If something is growing where it doesn't belong, we pull it out and call it a weed. If something is dead, or not growing well, we cut it off. If something is too big, or too small, we move it, stake it, tie it back. And why do we do all that? To make a mess of the yard? Because we hate squash or peas? No. We do it because, ultimately, we want the garden to grow and to put out a good crop for us to enjoy.

So it is with God. This is what John's gospel is trying to point to- about God and about us. Gardening is not an armchair activity, and neither is faith. There are choices to be made. And it is difficult work. This passage from John's gospel uses the image of vine-grower and vineyard to describe the relationship between God and the followers of Christ. The whole purpose for God's 'spring cleaning' is so that we will bear fruit. God prunes us so that we will have a stronger connection with Christ and be more effective as his servants in the world. And if you think that it is easy, it's not.

Many of us are probably really anxious right now, having to confront the state of the church, and the question of what our future may be and what type of ministry we are able to pursue. And this passage about dead branches and pruning doesn't seem to help much. But I have some good news for you. If you feel a twinge of anxiety, if you are worried about being cut off - there is still life in you, and the branch can still bear good fruit. It is important that we realize that God is not done with us. If that was true, we simply would not be here. But God is the God of resurrection-- so there is hope.

But the other worry we may have is that we simply do not have enough resources to make a difference. That is also a false assumption. Anyone who has ever set out new plants or tried to revive old ones knows it takes time and effort. All things start out small, but they can grow into something amazing when given attention and nurture, sun, water, manure and time.

Christ's invitation to abide and to bear fruit still comes to us today. We do not have to strive for grandiose achievements but we do need to be faithful. We don't need to have a full plan for new life but we absolutely need to be connected to our life-giver. So let me ask you, both as individuals and as a community of faith - What brings you life and nurtures your faith? What things do you do to strengthen your relationship to God and to attend to the prompting of the Spirit? What gives hope and joy to this church, and how are we sharing that blessing with others? Continue to nurture that, and grow in the grace of God. Then take the next step. Ask yourselves - What seeds of compassion need tending, and what old growth needs pruning? What new possibilities can be planted, what needs to be moved or changed or uprooted? And from all that you have received from Christ is there just one thing we can offer to our community? Then let us give it in faith.

God is the gardener. He recognizes the life of Christ in you. And God will bring it to fruition, for His glory. So let us rejoice and trust and strive to abide in Christ and to be his fruitful planting here in Northfield and wherever God may lead.

Amen.

## **Musical Reflection**    The Summons

[Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiXnbOORTAU>]

## **Joys and Concerns**

As you meet with God in prayer, please lift up the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast. God is eager to be your help and strength, to listen to you and meet your needs. Prayer is a gift we can always use.

## **Prayers of the People**

Gracious God, we thank you and praise you for all your goodness to us. We thank you for the gift of life we know in Christ and for the joy of abiding in your love. And we thank you for the privilege of the bearing fruit in our character and fruit in our actions. And so we come before you now, O God, asking for your mercy and guidance, that we may fulfill your holy purposes for us.

We pray, for your church, and especially for this congregation. May we seek to grow in our relationship with you, and allow ourselves to be pruned and shaped into a community of true disciples and faithful servants in your world. Be with us as we seek to discern your will and empower us to follow through on your call.

We pray, for our world. Grant our leaders the grace, wisdom and courage they need to support the welfare of all peoples. May all they do promote peace and justice, in our communities and throughout the world. We pray also for all who are in need this day. Grant your healing to the ill, your comfort to the sorrowful and your aid to the needy. Especially we lift up those people who are on our hearts and minds today... and we thank you for the ways you have blessed us in...

We praise you, Wonderful God, for the fullness of life that you have granted to us in Jesus Christ, Amen.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Let us join together in the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to say ~

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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. 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** [Audio <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akY1i4GIWmU>]

Hear Our Prayer, O God, Hear our prayer, O God,  
Incline Thine ear to us, And Grant us your peace.

**Closing Hymn** Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

[Audio - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyXu9pU9jJI>]

1. Love Divine, all loves excelling  
Joy of heaven to earth come down  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling  
All thy faithful mercies crown  
Jesus, thou art all compassion  
Pure unbounded love thou art  
Visit us with thy salvation  
Enter every trembling heart.

2. Come, Almighty to deliver,  
Let us all thy life receive;  
Suddenly return and never,  
Never more thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve thee as thy hosts above,  
Pray and praise thee without ceasing,  
Glory in thy perfect love.

3. Finish, then, thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in thee;  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

**Benediction**

Go now into the world

And may the everlasting love of God fill you  
May the sure presence of Christ dwell in you  
and may the living power of the Holy Spirit guide you.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.