



# First Congregational Church of Anoka United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation  
July 2, 2023 ♦ 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost



This bulletin is designed to assist you as you watch our livestreamed worship service, whether you follow along live or view it at a later time. The stream can be found on our YouTube channel at this location:

<https://www.youtube.com/@AnokaUCC>

## Welcome & Announcements

If you would like to join our mailing list, email [office@uccanoka.org](mailto:office@uccanoka.org) and ask to be added.

## Prelude

Gideon Scheeler

## The Church Bell Rings

## \* Opening Hymn

“Be Thou My Vision” #451

*In the spirit of our singing of hymns from an earlier time, we’re singing the Pilgrim Hymnal lyrics today.*

**Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
nought be all else to me save that thou art.  
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.**

**Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;  
thou my great Father, I thy true son;  
thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.**

**Riches I heed not, nor man’s empty praise,  
thou mine inheritance now and always;  
thou and thou only first in my heart,  
high king of heaven, my treasure thou art.**

**High king of heaven, my victory won,  
may I reach heaven’s joys, O bright heaven’s sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O Ruler of All. Amen!**

A Time for Children

ADVISORY: The livestream of the service continues during the Children's Time;  
if your child sits facing the Pastor their face shouldn't appear on camera.

Prayer of Preparation

"Pour Out Your Spirit"

C. Grundy

From the sac - red wa - ters of my birth  
to the sac - red wa - ters of this hour,  
I have leaned up - on You who knit me in my  
moth - er's womb. O pour out Your Spir - it now.

Special Music

"Who Do You Know?"

Hicks, Lynch

Anoka UCC String Band

Well Elijah proved the test when he said, "Let's build an altar  
and let the God of the Most High answer by fire."  
He said, "I will sacrifice unto my Lord and not put a flame down under,  
and you can do the same to your gods of Baal."

Now the prophets of Baal were many, and he let them go first.  
And they prayed from morning thru till afternoon.  
And when nothin' happened Elijah said, "Is your God on vacation?  
You'd better shout a little louder unto him."

Said if you don't know my God, who do you know?  
If you don't know Jehovah, then who's gonna save your soul?  
You've heard talk about heaven; would you like to go?  
If you don't know my God, who do you, who do you know?

Well Elijah's turn was next and he said, "Bring me some water.  
Pour it on the wood and wet it good.  
And then pour some on the trench that surrounds the altar,  
and then stand back and see what my God will do."

Then Elijah looked toward heaven and he prayed unto the father:  
“God of Abraham, make thyself known today.”  
And then a fire fell from heaven; you know a fire fell from heaven;  
consumed that wet altar, licked up all the water from the trench.

Children ages 3 and up may depart at this time for faith formation activities.  
Activity bags are available in the back of the sanctuary for those who might enjoy them.

### Scripture Reading – 1 Samuel 1:19-28

They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. <sup>20</sup> In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD." <sup>21</sup> The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. <sup>22</sup> But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD, and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time." <sup>23</sup> Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him; only-- may the LORD establish his word." So the woman remained and nursed her son, until she weaned him. <sup>24</sup> When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young. <sup>25</sup> Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. <sup>26</sup> And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. <sup>27</sup> For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him. <sup>28</sup> Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." She left him there for the LORD.

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

**Many: Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

Rev. Chris McArdle

Hymn

“Lord, I Want to Be a Christian” #454

*Follow the pattern of verse 1 in verses 2-4.*

**Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart;  
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart. In my heart, in my heart,  
Lord I want to be a Christian in my heart.**

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart...

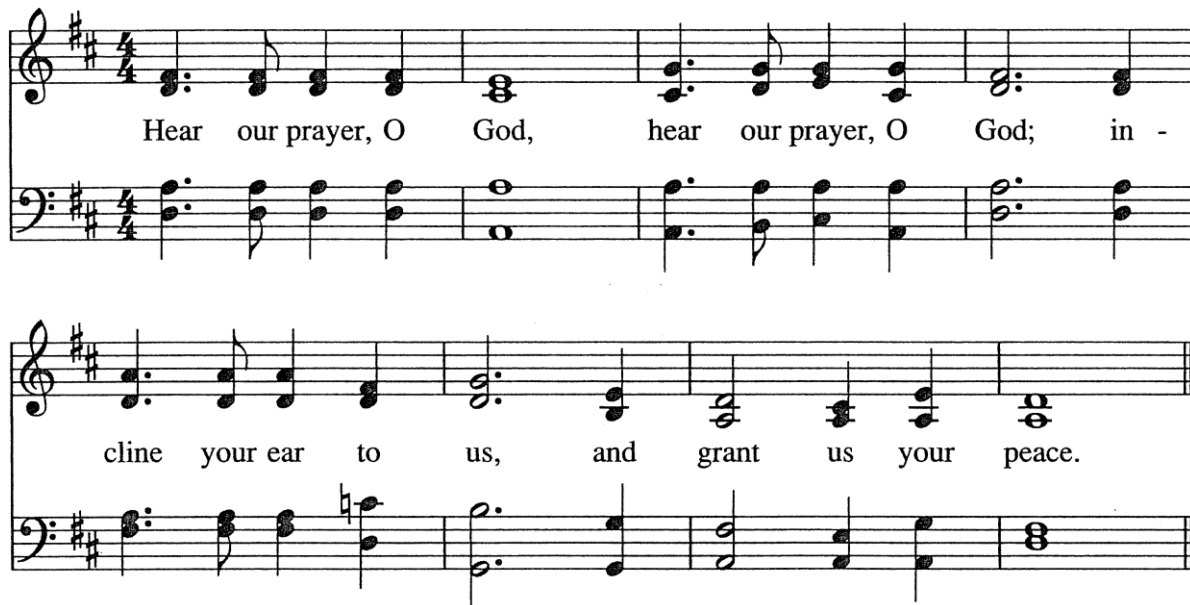
Lord I want to be more holy in my heart...

Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart...

### Prayers of the People

If you wish to share a prayer with the congregation (joy, concern, hope, worry, or anything at all), raise your hand and a Deacon will bring you a microphone. Offer your prayer and finish by saying, "God in your love" to which we will all respond, "**Hear our prayer.**"

### Sung Prayer



Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God; in -  
cline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.

### Prayer of Our Savior (unison)

The Prayer has many versions; pray whichever you desire (debts, sins, trespasses, etc.). We affirm that God has many names, so use one of the suggested or another of your choosing.

**Our Father/Mother/Creator, 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.**

### Offering

Text-to-Give: **844-334-1477**

Thank you for your gifts to our ministries!

If you are watching from home (live or later), please consider adding to the Offering by sending your gifts by mail, text, or online ([uccanoka.org/donate](http://uccanoka.org/donate)).

You can support the church further through the RaiseRight program: [www.raiseright.com](http://www.raiseright.com). Our unique church ID is 9WKLGX8TRZCN.

\* Doxology

LASST UNS ERFREUEN (#17)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow.**

**Praise God, all creatures here below. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Praise God for all that love has done; Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.**

**Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

\* Benediction

\* Congregational Blessing

“God Be With You” (#809)

Dorsey/Hutchins

**God be with you. God be with you. God be with you ‘til we meet again.**

**O God be with you. God be with you. God be with you ‘til we meet again.**

Postlude

Gideon Scheeler

*You may be seated as you listen to the Postlude. If you choose to depart at this time, please speak gently as you exit out of respect for those who choose to listen.*

**COFFEE HOUR IS SERVED AFTER WORSHIP!**

Acknowledgements

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Sermon Text

Between the song and the Scripture, we have before us today two competing models of so-called “Biblical manhood.” Perhaps that’s timely, for there’s a contemporary effort in some quarters to reclaim “Biblical manhood,” though it almost always involves a deeply selective reading of the text. The highest profile recent example is a new book by Missouri Senator Josh Hawley, wherein he writes that reclaiming manhood is the key to saving our nation.

Full disclosure: I have neither purchased nor read this book, but I’ve read reviews of it and Hawley’s own op-eds about how we can save America if men remember how to be “husbands, fathers, warriors, builders, priests, and kings.” Regarding the first two, he says, “[Men] are charged to give themselves for others and humbly accept their own limits, just as Abraham devoted himself to his wife Sarah and trusted God’s promise of a son to come.”

Let's talk about that! Abraham was faithful and true, and he also impregnated Sarah's slave, Hagar, and fathered Ishmael. This was because he and Sarah didn't actually believe that God would provide them a son (they were nonagenarians, you will recall). But when Isaac did come along, Abraham banished Hagar and Ishmael to the desert. Isn't this, too, a Biblical model of manhood?

Hawley writes that men are called to the character of warriors and builders. "They must battle evil and bring beauty out of chaos, just as Joshua challenged the monsters of Canaan and David laid the foundations for God's temple."

So let's talk about those guys, first with Joshua. What monsters? The Canaanites were a native people who were forcibly displaced by an invading army. Is this manhood? Was it manly when we did that to the first nations of this continent? Joshua famously is depicted saying, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." In the story named after him, he does this through conquest and genocide. And what about David? I've spilled much ink and breath on him. There is no doubt that he had his positive qualities, especially before he gained power. He was gentle, brave, and had a servant's heart. Then, after gaining the throne, he forced himself on women, failed to protect his daughter, and had a man murdered to cover up his adultery. Aren't these, too, models for Biblical manhood?

But enough about Josh Hawley; let's talk about Elijah. The String Band sang for us a song about that greatest of all the Hebrew Bible prophets, and it was about what was ostensibly Elijah's greatest act: his defeat of the priests of Baal atop Mount Carmel. There's even a statue atop Mount Carmel celebrating that victory. It positions Elijah, triumphant, holding down one of those priests under foot. Raised in his right hand is a wicked sword, and the prophet is about to strike down the Baalite.

In short, the story goes like this. In response to a terrible drought, Elijah stages a contest of Biblical manhood with the priests of Baal—450 of them. He challenges them to implore Baal to light an altar atop Mount Carmel. They fail. Then, just to show how great God is, Elijah has the altar soaked down with gallons of water before invoking Heaven's lightning to incinerate it all, even the water. But this victory isn't enough, so he orders the 450 priests to be captured and subdued, at which point he executes every one of them—with the text subtly suggesting he did it himself. This, too, is Biblical manhood.

Here's a further review of bad Biblical manhood: Adam blames his wife for something he was personally put in charge of. Abraham lies to a foreign king about his relationship with Sarah, leading to her being taken into the king's harem. Jacob's favoritism among his sons results in them perpetrating violence against each other. Aaron builds a golden calf for the people to worship. Jephthah sacrifices his daughter. Jonah runs away when God calls him to service. Solomon collects 1000 wives and concubines and enslaves his own people. Need I go on? "Biblical manhood" isn't always a virtue.

The counterpoint to this all is definitely Jesus, who bent down to wash the feet of his friends. Who dined with "tax collectors and sinners." Who went about with a whole council of women who bankrolled his ministry. Who said a person should deal with their own baggage before pointing out someone else's. Who suggested in pointed terms that wealth was a terrible idol. That violence was a really awful choice. That we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. But hey; we talk about Jesus all the time, right? So let's talk about this other guy, the one from the story today.

How many of you today had a clue who Elkanah was before I read about him? [Show of hands.] The story concerns in large part a woman who is infertile, and that's a good moment for us to acknowledge that we should seriously downplay the whole "God closed her womb" business. God doesn't decide who can and can't have kids. That's part of our deeply complex biology, and to assign heavenly motives to it invites us to worship a capricious and arbitrary God. But I digress. Elkanah.

Elkanah has two wives: Hannah and Peninnah. The story tells us that Elkanah treated Hannah with extra solicitude because he loved her, but don't be so quick to condemn his favoritism. Elkanah isn't Jacob. Remember the ancient context: the whole point of a wife was to produce an heir and then other children to help with the family business. Hannah wasn't able to do this, so Elkanah takes a second wife who can. But the key here is that whereas Elkanah marries Peninnah for economic reasons, he marries Hannah for love. He has already defied cultural expectations by doing this! Moreover, when Hannah is unable to conceive, he doesn't punish her for it. He's not Henry the Eighth, discarding or executing wife after wife because they only bear daughters. In fact, he feels quite distressed because *Hannah* is more upset than he is about her infertility. He tries to tell her it doesn't matter; that he loves her anyway. He's even a bit put out that his love isn't enough for her (that's fodder for therapy, but then again, most stuff is).

Hannah is determined, though, and she prays fervently to God. There's a whole scene about it right before today's reading in which she promises to raise the child as a nazirite—no haircuts, no wine, no beer (just like Samson). In the end, she does conceive, and she follows through on her promise. In fact, she takes it a step further—she doesn't just dedicate Samuel to God's service, but actually gives him to the high priest as a servant of the shrine. And where's Elkanah in all of this? Remarkably, he's sitting back, letting his beloved wife make her own decisions about her reproductive health. He even honors her promise to God and raises no objection when she wants to give Samuel to Eli, the high priest. She made a heartfelt promise, and he's a person of deep faith, too. Their child becomes a most unconventional (to us) gift back to God who has loved them.

I truly wonder what modern-day proponents of male headship think about Elkanah, a man whose "Biblical manhood" represents such a stark rejection of the selective understanding of "husband, father, warrior, builder, priest, and king." Elkanah, by all indications, is patient and kind. He is not arrogant, boastful, or rude. He does not insist on his own way. He demonstrates no irritation or resentment, especially about Hannah's reproductive realities. His love for her never ends.

When I was a teenager, I enjoyed coming home from school and watching the Disney cartoon *Ducktales*, a story that followed Donald Duck's nephews Huey, Dewey, and Louie as they lived with their Uncle Scrooge and had adventures. One of the things that helped them succeed in those adventures was their *Junior Woodchuck Guidebook*, a tome that told them everything they needed to know about how to be good, upstanding ducklings who positively contributed to society.

Friends, the Bible is no *Junior Woodchuck Guidebook*, and anyone who tells you it is is probably selling you something. Yes, we can draw examples on how to live from these pages—both good examples and bad examples. If history is any indication, we too often select the bad ones. So it's at moments like these that I remember an acronym called THINK, one that is a guide for social media posting. It says, "Is it True? Is it Helpful? Is it Inspiring? Is it Necessary? Is it kind?"

Perhaps when we look to the text for models of Biblical manhood, we should ask ourselves those questions before we decide whose example to follow.

Amen.

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*First Congregational Church, UCC of Anoka is an Open and Affirming Christian Community for all. We affirm that the image of God is most fully reflected in diversity. We invite all people to share their energy and talents in full participation with our community. We welcome all individuals and families of any sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, relationship status, race, national origin, socioeconomic status, age, mental and physical health or ability, or belief. Together, we celebrate these and all other facets of one's essential being.*