



First Congregational Church of Anoka United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

June 4, 2023 ♦ 1st 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 are a guest with us today, welcome!

If you would like to join our mailing list, email office@uccanoka.org and ask to be added.

Prelude

Koki Sato

The Church Bell Rings

Communion

One: Just as Jesus gathered with his friends on a night we would come to call Maundy Thursday, we gather this day to share the bread of life and the cup of compassion.

Many: As we do, we remember you, O Christ.

One: As we share these elements today, we acknowledge that we are doing so again in a way we have not observed since March of three years ago.

Many: We celebrate the sacrament with eager expectation, O Jesus!

One: Today, as Jesus did so long ago, we break actual bread, that it may be shared in the community. As Jesus most likely did not do so long ago, we also share gluten-free crackers and peel-and-eat safety elements because we recognize that Jesus calls us to meet people where they are.

Many: We love our neighbors as Jesus loves us all.

One: Let us bless these elements and each other, that this sacrament might once again be for us a sign and manifestation of the Beloved Community.

Many: Make it so!

One: Let us pray. Holy One, we trust that your love encompasses the whole universe, in no small part because as dust returns to dust, so to do our atoms return to the embrace of the cosmos. We are star-stuff. We are the universe, made manifest, trying to figure itself out. We acknowledge that this means we are interconnected with each other, with our neighbors, and with all of

Creation in ways we do not always affirm or embrace. Help us, O God, to remember that. Help us to remember that everything I am is made of everyone around me, that everything I've done is done by everyone who taught me, that everyone I've lost is still living here inside me—just like Jesus. Give me the ears to hear their voices in my heart, that those voices may fuel our love. Bless these elements, that they may fuel our spirits and bodies. Bless us all, that we may continue to walk your Way of compassion and care. And now, hear us as we pray to you the manner taught to us by Jesus:

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.

Sharing the Elements

One: We share bread because Jesus bade us eat and be filled. *(The bread is broken)*

One: We share the fruit of the vine because Jesus bade us drink and remember the New Covenant he pointed to even in his dying. *(The cup is poured.)*

Ushers will bring the elements to you in the pews. You may hold the bread until all have been served. During the distribution, we sing:

Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and nev - er be hun - gry.

Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.

When all have received bread:

One: This is the bread of life given for the Body of Christ. Let all the people say:

Many: Amen! [Eat.]

You may hold the cup until all have been served. As the ushers distribute, we sing:

Eat this bread; drink this cup; come to me and never be hungry.

Eat this bread; drink this cup; trust in me and you will not thirst.

When all have received the cup:

One: This is the cup of blessing for the people of God. Let all the people say:

Many: Amen! *[Drink.]*

Prayer of Thanksgiving (unison)

We thank you, MOTHER OF ALL, for sending us your child to teach us a Way of living that is full of spirit and truth. We thank you for the gifts of this Table, and we pledge ourselves to living out the welcome of this Table in our lives. May your love continue to inspire us and remind us that we are all part of each other, as inextricable from each other as you are from love. Amen.

* Opening Hymn

“They’ll Know We Are Christians” (page 9)

*The traditional lyrics found on the scan have been gently amended
in the following to offer a more inclusive text.*

**We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord, (x2)
and we pray that all unity may one day be restored:
and they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.**

**We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand (x2)
and together we’ll spread the news that God is in our land:
and they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.**

**We will work with each other, we will work side by side, (x2)
and we’ll guard each one’s dignity and save each one’s pride:
and they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.**

**All praise to the (Father/Mother/etc.), from whom all things come,
and all praise to Christ Jesus, God’s only Son,
and all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one:
and they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.**

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.

Scripture Reading – Psalm 130:5-8 and Psalm 131 (using some language from Dr. Gafney)

I wait for the WOMB OF CREATION, my soul waits, and in her word I hope; ⁶ my soul waits for the Creator more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. ⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the CREATOR OF ALL there is steadfast love, and with her is great power to redeem. ⁸ It is she who will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.

WOMB OF LIFE, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. ² Rather, I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. ³ O Israel, hope in the WELLSPRING OF LIFE from this time on and forevermore.

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

Many: **Thanks be to God.**

Meditation

Rev. Chris McArdle

*Everything I am is made of everything around me / I'm borrowing it gladly for a while
'Cause I am just a wave in the ocean / Just a little wave in a giant sea*

*And everything I've done is done by everyone who taught me / Even though I give it my own style,
'Cause I am just a wave in the ocean / Just a little wave in a giant sea*

*And everyone I've lost is still living here inside me, / I can hear their voices in my heart,
'Cause I am just a wave in the ocean, / Just a little wave in a giant sea*

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).

You can support the church further through the RaiseRight program:
www.raiseright.com. Our unique church ID is 9WKLGX8TRZCN.

Offertory

Koki Sato

* 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!

* Hymn

“From All that Dwell below the Skies” #27

From all that dwell below the skies

let the Creator’s praise arise; Alleluia! Alleluia!

Let the Redeemer’s name be sung through every land, by every tongue.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Eternal are your mercies, God;

your truth stands every high and broad: Alleluia! Alleluia!

Your praise shall sound from shore to shore till suns shall rise and set no more.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Benediction

**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

Koki Sato

*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.*

Acknowledgements

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Sermon Text

I’m flipping the script more than once today. Chris asked to do the Children’s Time, in some places known as the Children’s Sermon, and I happily agreed. Kari *didn’t* ask to do the sermon, but what she’s going to sing for us carries the voice of the Spirit, and it conveys the Good News in a way I’m not quite going to today.

Part of why I’m doing this is because of this lyric: “everything I am is made of everything around me.” It reminds me of a quote from Carl Sagan, which in turns reminds me that I referenced that quote in a poem I wrote for you all in October of 2020. When I went and found that poem, I decided to break my historic practice of NOT repeating sermons, so that’s what I’m going to read today. The other reason I want to re-share this creation with you is because I wrote it in the midst of our COVID separation from each other, and today we have laid to rest the last vestige of that time by sharing Communion in the traditional way. My heart is full to be able to share the bread and gluten-free wafers AND the peel-and-eats, and my joy abounds at the sound of glass Communion cups clinking into their pew-holders.

When we celebrate Communion, it is as a remembrance of where Jesus was, so that we might not ever forget. Today, I offer you again this poem as a remembrance of where we were three years ago, for we should never forget that time in our lives.

I’m having a hard time settling on the right metaphor, you know?

Should I look to Sisyphus, who kept rolling that boulder up the mountain, only to have it roll back down every time it looked like he was about to reach the summit?

Or should I join Lucy and Ethel on the chocolate-wrapping line?

There’s a sort of parallel to this in social media usage. The experts call it “doomscrolling,” a dynamic in which you just keep scrolling and reading, scrolling and reading, scrolling and reading... all the bad news.

I know the ellipsis isn’t a comma. It’s supposed to indicate deletion—but only in grammar.

I’m talking math, where three little dots connote an endless, repeating pattern.

A doomscroll, if you will.

An ever-falling stone.

A non-stop conveyer belt.

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That's 2020, wrapped in cellophane.

A decimal that doesn't end, and we don't even get pi(e).

A virus that just keeps chugging along, fueled by stubbornness and despair.

An election season that feels like a glimpse at infinity.

...

It's at times like these that I try to drown myself in pages that tell different stories.

Stories of dragons, of cryosleep century ships carrying hopeful colonists to distant, uninhabited worlds, of wizards and witches and the miraculous mundane.

That helps.

It does.

I can get away, if only for a while.

But I have to return, and there's the boulder waiting for my callused hands.

For me, in the end (and sometimes in the beginning), I turn to different pages.

Crisp, those pages. Like onionskins.

The young me worried about damaging them.

The older me smiles at the age-browned Scotch tape that holds a Psalm together.

These are pages of promise.

Pages of hope.

Pages that remind me that there is nothing under the sun that we haven't seen before.

It is not to dismiss the fear that I read about an enslaved people, liberated after 400 years.

It is not to diminish the impact of today that I read about a conquered people, liberated after 70 years in Exile.

It is, perhaps, to excavate courage I read of an oppressed people whose overlords killed the Morning Star.

But how do you kill a star?

It burns to ash any weapon turned against it.

It blazes bright, revealing those who co-opt the darkness for their cruel ends.

Even when it collapses, compressing into a ravenous maw that devours even light, some still imagine it is a gateway to Paradise.

And sometimes the star detonates, force upon force, scattering the seeds of new life into a Universe defined by distance we cannot fathom.

Sagan called it "star stuff" and said we grew from it.

He said that we are the Universe, trying to figure itself out.

Does that mean the farthest star is, in a way, closer to us than breathing?

How weighty to me are these thoughts!

I do believe the olde preacher who said, "There is yet more light and truth to break forth from God's holy word."

But on days when I am weary, I look to an older preacher who said, "Come unto me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Give me rest, O Guardian of my soul.

Give us rest, O Revealer of Love.

That we may awaken

That we may Rise

That we may help each other roll away the stone

That we may help each other unseal the scroll

Let Life Unending, not Death, be the final word.

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Amen...

◆ **First Congregational Church UCC, Anoka, MN** ◆

1923 Third Avenue, Anoka, MN 55303 ◆ (763) 421-3375

Pastor – Rev. Chris McArdle

Minister of Visitation – Pastor Kelsey Renk

Director of Music Ministries – Don Shier

Keyboardist – Koki Sato

Moderator – Terja Larsen

Website: <http://www.uccanoka.org> ◆ Email: office@uccanoka.org

Text-to-Give: 844-334-1477



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.

119 They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love

By this shall all men know...if ye have love one to another. John 13:35

PETER SCHOLTES

PETER SCHOLTES

Unison

1. We are one in the Spir-it, we are one in the Lord, We are
2. We will walk with each oth-er, we will walk hand in hand, We will
3. We will work with each oth-er, we will work side by side, We will
4. All praise to the Fa-ther, from whom all things come, And all

one in the Spir-it, we are one in the Lord, And we pray that all
walk with each oth-er, we will walk hand in hand, And to - geth - er we'll
work with each oth-er, we will work side by side, And we'll guard each man's
praise to Christ Je-sus, His on - ly Son, And all praise to the

Refrain

u - ni - ty may one day be re - stored:
spread the news that God is in our land: And they'll know we are Chris-tians
dig - ni - ty and save each man's pride:
Spir - it, who makes us one:

by our love, by our love, Yes, they'll know we are Chris-tians by our love.