

The First Church of Christ in Hartford  
*founded 1632*  
a member of the United Church of Christ



**Embracing God's Presence,  
Serving the City,  
Building Upon Our Heritage**

**Sunday, August 13, 2017**

# THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HARTFORD

*An Open and Affirming Congregation of  
The United Church of Christ*

## THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

*Welcome ~ Bienvenidos*

August 13, 2017

10:00 AM

WELCOME TO WORSHIP AT CENTER CHURCH. We are glad you have joined us for this service of worship and the fellowship of this congregation. We hope that you will be both comforted and challenged by the Word of God for us today. If you are new to our community, we hope you will consider making this your church home. Any of our worship leaders or ushers will be able to help with your questions. If you are already a member, be sure to extend a friendly greeting to those around you, starting with someone you don't know...yet.

*Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices  
before the service of Worship begins.*

*Childcare is available in the nursery (room A)  
during the summer months.*

### PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

*“Dance like no one is watching,  
Love like you'll never be hurt,  
Sing like no one is listening,  
Live like it's heaven on earth. “*

*~ William W. Purkey*

TOLLING OF THE HOUR and GREETING

HIGHLIGHTING OUR MINISTRIES

## COMING BEFORE GOD

### PRELUDE

Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song

arr. Michael Burkhardt

*PLEASE STAND.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Today is a new day: a day filled with new life, new hope, and new possibilities.

**People: Today is a new day: a day when we have the opportunity to see things anew.**

Leader: Today is a day our God has made!

**All: We rejoice in the gift of today - a day filled with God's abiding love, presence, and grace.**

### HYMN

We Worship You, O God

No. 26

LYONS

*Please sing verses 1, 3, & 5.*

*PLEASE BE SEATED.*

### UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION and THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Familiar songs, beloved faces, well-learned prayers, stories of old bring us to a place of deep Sabbath, deep comfort, and deep rest. We come longing for the peace this hour affords. We come hoping for your grace to transform the everyday into something special and awe inspiring. We come hoping to be healed and made new, not just so we can serve you, but so that we can live our lives more fully and with more joy. In this time of worship, be our healer, be our peace, be our joy, be our song. We pray these things in the name of the one who taught us to pray together saying...**

**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, for ever. Amen.**

(\* = traditional wording but you may use alternative wording, such as “God,” “Creator,” or “Mother,” as seems fitting.)

## CONFESSION AND RESPONSE

### CALL TO CONFESSION

### UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Sometimes, O God, we live our lives in a box, overly concerned of what others think, and bound by the standards and expectations of others, instead of being faithful to ourselves. We are afraid to dance, lest we look clumsy. We are afraid to sing, in case we are out of tune. We are afraid to love, because sometimes love is imperfect and messy. We are afraid to live as Jesus told us to live, because sometimes it requires radical choices, actions, and judgment from those we hold dear. We are afraid to live life fully and with abandon, but you have encouraged us to take risks and try. Forgive us our fear. Give us courage, we pray, to dance, love, sing, and live with more joy and less boxes. May it be so.**

### SILENCE FOR REFLECTION

### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

**Leader:** People of God, the good news is that God takes our old and worn-out boxes, reclaims them, and turns them into something new. In Christ, we are new, box-free creations! Let us rejoice!

**People:** **In Jesus Christ, we are loved, forgiven and restored to new life. Alleluia!**

*PLEASE STAND.*

Congregational Response

“Glory to God the Creator”

music: Ronald A. Nelson, 1986

text: *Gloria patri*, 3<sup>rd</sup> century, transl.

## THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: The love of God, the peace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Since in Christ we have been reconciled, let us share his peace with one another.

## PROCLAIMING GOD'S LIVING WORD

*PLEASE BE SEATED.*

### HEBREW SCRIPTURE READING

#### Ecclesiastes 3

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: <sup>2</sup>a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; <sup>3</sup>a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; <sup>4</sup>a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; <sup>5</sup>a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; <sup>6</sup>a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; <sup>7</sup>a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; <sup>8</sup>a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. <sup>9</sup>What gain have the workers from their toil? <sup>10</sup>I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with.

<sup>11</sup>He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. <sup>12</sup>I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; <sup>13</sup>moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. <sup>14</sup>I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. <sup>15</sup>That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by.

<sup>16</sup>Moreover I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness, wickedness was there as well. <sup>17</sup>I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work. <sup>18</sup>I said in my heart with regard to human beings that God is testing them to show that they are but animals. <sup>19</sup>For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity. <sup>20</sup>All go to one place; all are from the dust,

and all turn to dust again. <sup>21</sup>Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth? <sup>22</sup>So I saw that there is nothing better than that all should enjoy their work, for that is their lot; who can bring them to see what will be after them?

## GOSPEL READING

Matthew 11:15-19, 25-30

Translation: *The Message*

<sup>15</sup> “Are you listening to me? Really listening?”

<sup>16-19</sup> “How can I account for this generation? The people have been like spoiled children whining to their parents, ‘We wanted to skip rope, and you were always too tired; we wanted to talk, but you were always too busy.’ John came fasting and they called him crazy. I came feasting and they called me a lush, a friend of the riffraff. Opinion polls don’t count for much, do they? The proof of the pudding is in the eating.”

<sup>25-26</sup> Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer: “Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You’ve concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that’s the way you like to work.”

<sup>27</sup> Jesus resumed talking to the people, but now tenderly. “The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, coming out of Father and Son intimacies and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I’m not keeping it to myself; I’m ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen.

<sup>28-30</sup> “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

SERMON Dancing in the Dark

The Rev. Dr. Meredith Jeffers

## RESPONDING IN FAITH

*PLEASE STAND.*

HYMN

Lord of the Dance

see next page →

*PLEASE BE SEATED.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

## THE OFFERING OF GIFTS AND TITHES

*(We encourage you to use offering envelopes when giving.)*

Offertory Piano Solo

Selection by David Reynolds, Pianist

*PLEASE STAND AS THE OFFERING IS BROUGHT FORWARD.*

Hymn of Presentation

OLD HUNDREDTH

text: Thomas Ken, 1674; alt.  
music: Louis Bourgeois, 1551

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, you heav'nly host:  
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.*

## UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**For the many ways you have filled our lives with abundance, we are grateful! Take these gifts, gifts of our labor and our hearts, and use them to transform our world, this place, and each of us, so that we might live more full and joy-filled lives. Bless each giver. Bless each gift. Amen.**

## GOING FORTH

*PLEASE REMAIN STANDING.*

HYMN

Sent Forth by God's Blessing

No. 76

THE ASH GROVE

## BENEDICTION

*Please enjoy the postlude or exit quietly.  
Go in peace!*

## POSTLUDE

Amazing Grace

setting by Jack Schrader