



*The First Congregational Church
of the United Church of Christ
Stockbridge, Massachusetts*

SUNDAY WORSHIP May 4, 2025 10:00 a.m.

Children are invited to Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. returning to worship for Children's Time. Nursery care is available during worship. **Today prayers to be lifted must be submitted in writing and can be handed to a Deacon or placed in the offering plate.**

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

GATHERING MUSIC "Finale – Andante" from *Organ Sonata No. 6*,
by Felix Mendelssohn Scott Bailey, organ

FRAMING WORDS / WELCOME Rev. Brent Damrow

GATHERING IN WORSHIP

INTROIT *Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service*, words by Albert Bayly

*CALL TO WORSHIP from the Wellspring Liturgy Jeremy Ridenour

One: Lord God, Creator of all; you created us to be your People; a people free to love and to serve you with all our minds, with all our hearts and with all our strength.

All: So we come to worship our God, leaving behind all that binds us: our doubts and our fears; our darkness and our hopelessness.

One: Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of all: you came as a child, gathered into the loving embrace of a family. As an adult, you shared love, laughter and tears with those whom you knew as friends and the love of the Father with all who would receive it.

continued

All: So we come to love and to honour you, celebrating the companionship of those you have called to be your disciples.

One: Gracious Spirit, Inspirer of all; brooding over us gathered here; eternally breathing Life into all of creation; endlessly giving, endlessly comforting.

All: So we come to be still in your presence; to hear in the silence the whisper of God breathing life into our souls; deepening our unity in the very life of God.

*HYMN

God is Here!

Pew hymnal #461

CONTEMPORARY READING Pope Francis on Discipleship Susan Moor

“We cannot be tepid disciples. The Church needs our courage in order to give witness to truth.”

“Let us not forget: if we are to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus, our lives must bear witness to what we preach.”

“Let the risen Jesus enter your life — welcome him as a friend, with trust: he is life! If up till now you have kept him at a distance, step forward. He will receive you with open arms. If you have been indifferent, take a risk; you won’t be disappointed. If following him seems difficult, don’t be afraid. Trust him, be confident that he is close to you, he is with you, and he will give you the peace you are looking for and the strength to live as he would have you do.”

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

CALL TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM *Draw Us In the Spirit’s Tether*, by Harold Friedell

*DOXOLOGY

Lasst Uns Erfreuen

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ the Word in flesh born low;

Alleluia, Alleluia.

Praise Holy Spirit evermore;

One God, Triune, whom we adore.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

*BLESSING OF THE GIFTS

BRINGING OUR PRAYERS

The Lord's Prayer

Our God, 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. 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

THE GIFT OF THE WORD

ENGAGING A SACRED STORY: Stephen

Pastor Brent

Based on Acts 6:1-7:2a, 44-60 (see page 6)

*HYMN

Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples

Pew hymnal #434

GATHERING AT THE TABLE

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Ray Bergmann

One: O Lord, forgive us when we fail to respond to your call with faith.

All: Through your Spirit we stand in the assurance of your acceptance.

One: Forgive us when we fail to love God with our whole heart or our neighbors as ourselves.

All: Through your Spirit draw us together as one.

One: Forgive us when we are shackled by our narrow understandings of discipleship and our clouded sense of purpose.

All: Through your Spirit draw us into the illumination of your empowering love.

One: Forgive us when we are frightened of the future or pull back from the demand of your calling. Forgive us when we fail to sense your presence in our past, to acknowledge your grace in the present moment, and to trust you for our future.

All: Through your Spirit mold us, fill us, and use us for your purposes of love. (Please be seated for a time of silent confession.)

SUNG RESPONSE *Spirit of the Living God*

Pew hymnal #322

*WORDS OF ASSURANCE

*SHARING OF THE PEACE

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Pastor Brent

SHARING A STORY AND A MEAL

We will share the meal in the pews. You are invited to serve one another. Please wait until the whole church has been served the bread that we might eat it together as a reminder that we are one body. When you have been served the cup, you may drink it when you are ready as a reminder that in the end, we all will stand alone before Christ. The bread is gluten-free and the cup is unfermented grape juice so that there might be no barriers to this meal.

MUSIC DURING DISTRIBUTION *Let Us Break Bread Together*

SUNG PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING, by Mark Miller

See page 5

ACTIVE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

It is a tradition of this church on Communion Sunday to invite people to bring items or donations for the People's Pantry.

GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

INVITATIONS

*HYMN

Called as Partners in Christ's Service

Pew hymnal #343

*BENEDICTION

Pastor Brent

POSTLUDE

Grand Choeur, by Théodore Salomé

Scott Bailey

Scott Bailey is the collaborative pianist for the department of music at Westfield State University where he also directs the University Chorale. He has served as the music director at The Episcopal Church of the Atonement in Westfield and First Congregational Church in North Adams. He is a Colleague of the American Guild of Organists and is an active performer, conductor, composer, and music director throughout Western Massachusetts.

Lord's Prayer

Mark Miller

mp

Our God, in hea-ven, ho-ly is your name, your

reign come, your will done, on earth as in hea-ven.

slower

Give us to-day our dai-ly bread, and help us for-give, as we have been for-giv-en.

mf

In the time of tri-al lead us in-to light, for yours is the kin-dom, and the

f *mp*

po- wer, and the glo- ry, for-e- ver. Our God, in

hea- ven, ho-ly is your name, ho-ly is your name.

Acts 6:1-7:2a, 44-60

6 Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. 2 And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Therefore, brothers and sisters, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, 4 while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." 5 What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

8 Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. 11 Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses

and God." 12 They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. 13 They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law, 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." 15 And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

7 Then the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?" 2 And Stephen replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.

44 "Our ancestors had the tent of testimony in the wilderness, as God directed when he spoke to Moses, ordering him to make it according to the pattern he had seen. 45 Our ancestors in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the peoples whom God drove out before our ancestors. And it was there until the time of David, 46 who found favor with God and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. 47 But it was Solomon who built a house for him. 48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands; as the prophet says,

49 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? 50 Did not my hand make all these things?' 51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears,

you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. 52 Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. 53 You are the ones who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it." 54 When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. 55 But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see the heavens

opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" 57 But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. 58 Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him, and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.



Music Notes ~ Scott Bailey

Prelude: Felix Mendelssohn was a skilled organist and had performed in Britain during his 1842 tour of London and Oxford. His organ sonatas, written after this tour, harken back to the works of J.S. Bach and many credit Mendelssohn for reigniting interest in Bach's music. The sixth sonata incorporates the Martin Luther's chorale *Vater unser im Himmelreich* and the quiet Andante of this final movement reflects an austere and English sensibility.

Anthem: Harold Friedell was a professor of theory and composition at the School of Sacred Music, Union Theological Seminary, in New York City. His popular 1957 setting of Percy Dearmer's text *Draw Us In the Spirit's Tether* helped to bring about its inclusion as a hymn in hymnals published after 1960.

Postlude: Théodore Salomé was highly regarded as an organist, composer, and pedagogue in Paris during the 19th century, though he is often overshadowed by his contemporaries including César Franck, Théodore Dubois, Charles-Marie Widor, and Camille Saint-Saëns. His *Grand Choeur* from his 1875 collection of ten organ pieces is dedicated to his newborn son René.

Thank you to all who helped with today's service, including Deacons David Anderegg, Gary Cilley, Helen McCormick, and Drea Pecor; readers Susan Moor and Jeremy Ridenour; usher Jo Ann Levitt; storytellers Kim Ruffing and Cindy Brown. Will Curtiss is running the Livestream and Scarlett Ritcher is in the nursery.

Book Club

How Firm a Foundation - Book Club
Haven't read the new history of the church, or you've read it and want to know more? Join co-author Michael Lynch for a three-week book club series, May 29, June 5 & 12. Details to be announced soon. Copies are available in the church office.

Active Prayer of Thanksgiving

Today we continue the practice of an Active Prayer of Thanksgiving as an act

of gratitude after receiving communion. Non-perishable food items and toiletries and/or cash/check for our own Pop-Up Pantry may be placed in the baskets. Please make your check payable to First Congregational Church, memo line: Pop-Up Pantry. To contribute via Venmo, FCC Stockbridge, note Pop-Up Pantry on the 'What's this for?' line. Many thanks for your loving generosity!

Welcome! We are Open and Affirming, which means that we invite persons of every sexual orientation, gender identification and expression, racial and cultural identity, age, physical ability, economic circumstance, faith background and family structure to share fully in the ministry, leadership and fellowship of this congregation's life in Christ.

As followers of Christ and committed to Isaiah's charge to "maintain justice and do what is right," we acknowledge with gratitude and humility that we are learning, speaking, gathering, and worshiping on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who are the indigenous peoples of this land. Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

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