



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

4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER & MOTHER'S DAY

May 11, 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 prayer requests can be shared verbally during worship. Alternatively, you may place a prayer slip in the offering plate or give to a Deacon.**

**PREPARING FOR WORSHIP**

PRELUDES

*Springtime*, by Edvard Grieg

Bell Choir

*The Ashgrove*, arr. Donald E. Allured

FRAMING WORDS / WELCOME

Rev. Brent Damrow

**GATHERING IN WORSHIP**

\*CONGREGATIONAL INTROIT

*Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth*

See page 6

\*CALL TO WORSHIP from the Wellspring Liturgy

Rich Geiler

One: People of God, open your eyes, open your ears, open your hearts!

**All: We come to celebrate the story of our God, a story of compassion and mercy,**

One: A story of redemption and love;

**All: A story passed down from generation to generation,**

One: People of God let us proclaim the wonderful things that God has done!

**All: We open our lips to sing God's praise,**

One: We open our lips to proclaim the truth,

continued

**All: We open our lives that we might never forget and that our children might learn.**

One: People of God, welcome to worship!

**All: Thanks be to God.**

\*HYMN

*Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty*

Pew hymnal #482

## **THE GIFT OF THE WORD**

CONTEMPORARY READING *At the River Clarion*, Mary Oliver      Rich Geiler

I don't know who God is exactly.

But I'll tell you this.

I was sitting in the river named Clarion, on a water splashed stone  
and all afternoon I listened to the voices of the river talking.

Whenever the water struck a stone it had something to say,  
and the water itself, and even the mosses trailing under the water.

And slowly, very slowly, it became clear to me what they were saying.

Said the river I am part of holiness.

And I too, said the stone. And I too, whispered the moss beneath the water.

I'd been to the river before, a few times.

Don't blame the river that nothing happened quickly.

You don't hear such voices in an hour or a day.

You don't hear them at all if selfhood has stuffed your ears.

And it's difficult to hear anything anyway, through all the traffic, the  
ambition.

SUNG RESPONSE *Shall We Gather at the River*

Verse 1

**Shall we gather at the river,  
where bright angel feet have trod,  
with its crystal tide forever  
flowing by the throne of God?**

Refrain:

**Yes, we'll gather at the river,  
the beautiful, the beautiful river,  
Gather with the saints at the river  
that flows by the throne of God.**

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing.

SERMON *What is to prevent it?*

Pastor Brent

\*HYMN *Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling*

See page 7

## OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

### CALL TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY *Peter, go ring-a dem bells* spiritual, arr. H. T. Burleigh

John Demler, soloist

**\*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**

**INVITATION TO PRAYER** *Beach Spring* from The Sacred Harp,

arr. by Nancy Hill Cobb

Bell Choir

**BRINGING OUR PRAYERS**

The Lord's Prayer, adapted by Parker J. Palmer

**Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother,**

**Holy and blessed is your true name.**

**We pray for your reign of peace to come,**

**We pray that your good will be done,**

**Let heaven and earth become one.**

**Give us this day the bread we need,**

**Give it to those who have none.**

**Let forgiveness flow like a river between us,**

**From each one to each one.**

**Lead us to holy innocence**

**Beyond the evil of our days —**

**Come swiftly Mother, Father, come.**

**For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy:**

**Forever your name is All in One.**

**PRAYER RESPONSE**

*O Word of God, Incarnate*

John Demler, soloist

(Williams W. How, Psalm 119:105) **MUNICH**

**TIME WITH CHILDREN**

## \*SHARING OF THE PEACE

## GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

## INVITATIONS

*HYMN	<i>Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise</i>	Pew hymnal #539
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\*BENEDICTION Pastor Brent

POSTLUDE Chorale Prelude on *Lobe den Herren*, Johann Gottfried Walther  
Edwin Lawrence, organ

## Music Notes ~ Edwin Lawrence

Today's postlude recalls the music of our joyful first hymn, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." In a style typical of German Chorale-based pieces of the 17th and 18th centuries, we hear "voices" in the hands imitating each other, dancing with motifs from each phrase of the hymn-tune. Following this "pre-imitation," the feet step in to intone the phrase in longer note-values.

Johann Gottfried Walther was a second-cousin and near contemporary of J. S. Bach.



To all members of The First Congregational Church,  
United Church of Christ, Stockbridge, Massachusetts

In accordance with the By-laws of the Church, **we hereby call the Annual Congregational Meeting** for Sunday, May 18, following worship, at approximately 11:10. Included will be votes to approve:

1. Nominating slate for Officers, and Board and Committee members
2. To act upon any other business that may legally come before the meeting.

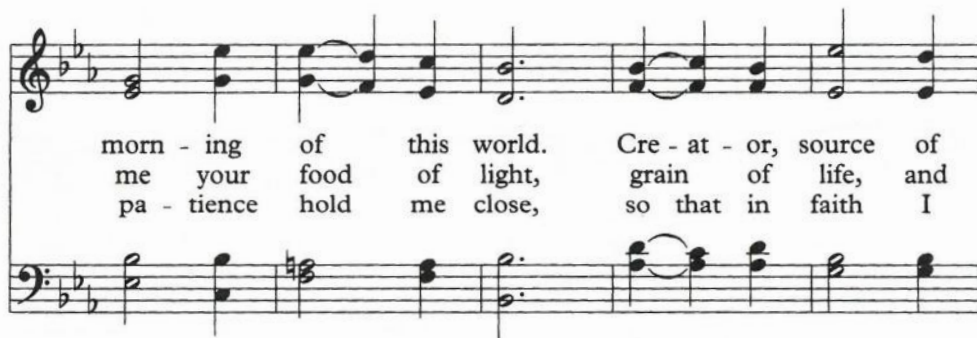
Charlotte Rodgers, Clerk

Ron Hanft, Moderator

# Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth 2050



1. Moth-er - ing God, you gave me birth in the bright  
 2. Moth-er - ing Christ, you took my form, of - fer - ing  
 3. Moth-er - ing Spir - it, nur - t'ring one, in arms of



morn - ing of this world. Cre - at - or, source of  
 me your food of light, grain of life, and  
 pa - tience hold me close, so that in faith I



ev - ery breath, you are my rain, my wind, my sun.  
 grape of love, your ver - y bod - y for my peace.  
 root and grow un - til I flow'r, un - til I know.

WORDS: Jean Janzen, based on the writings of Juliana of Norwich (15th cent.)

MUSIC: H. Percy Smith

MARYTON

LM

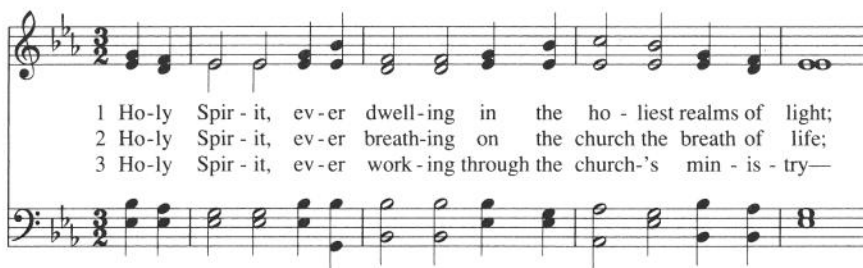
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*The Faith We Sing (2000)*

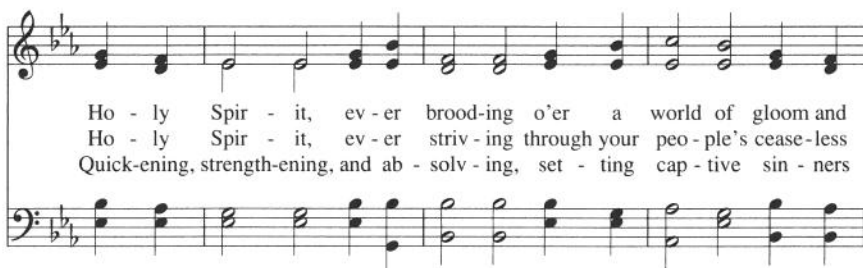
# Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling

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*Timothy Rees, 1922; alt.*



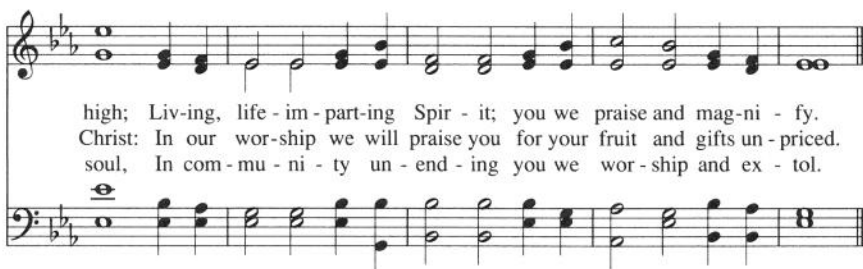
1 Ho-ly Spir - it, ev - er dwell - ing in the ho - liest realms of light;  
 2 Ho-ly Spir - it, ev - er breath - ing on the church the breath of life;  
 3 Ho-ly Spir - it, ev - er work - ing through the church-'s min - is - try—



Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er brood - ing o'er a world of gloom and  
 Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er striv - ing through your peo - ple's cease - less  
 Quick - ening, strength - ening, and ab - solv - ing, set - ting cap - tive sin - ners



blight; Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er rais - ing earth - bound souls to glo - ry  
 strife; Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er form - ing in the church the mind of  
 free; Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er bind - ing age to age and soul to



high; Liv - ing, life - im - part - ing Spir - it; you we praise and mag - ni - fy.  
 Christ: In our wor - ship we will praise you for your fruit and gifts un - priced.  
 soul, In com - mu - ni - ty un - end - ing you we wor - ship and ex - tol.

*Timothy Rees, Welsh curate, lecturer, chaplain, and winner of the Military Cross in World War I, was appointed Bishop of Llandaff in 1931. These words were written for the Anglican Community of Mirfield, Yorkshire, of which he was a member.*

Tune: NETTLETON 8.7.8.7.D.  
 John Wyeth's Repository of Sacred Music, 1813

*The New Century Hymnal (1995)*

**Thank you** to all who helped with today's service, including Deacons Sarah Conly and Jo Ann Levitt; reader Rich Geiler; usher Susan Moor; fellowship Elizabeth Young; greeter Marion Pomeroy; storytellers Jeremy Ridenour and Megan Kolano. Will Curtiss is running the Livestream and Scarlett Ritcher and Rae Geddes are 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.

**Applause** is a wonderful reaction to events that bring us joy, and is often

given in recognition of being entertained. In church, where we are worshipping God, however, applause can be a distraction from the celebration of the Holy Spirit. To express appreciation for music that is part of worship, we ask that applause be saved until after the postlude (when worship is over).

*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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