



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

SUNDAY WORSHIP

July 27, 2025 10:00 a.m.

Children start in worship with an optional activity after Time with Children. Nursery care is available during worship. **Prayer requests can be shared verbally during worship. Or you may give a prayer slip to a Deacon or place it in the offering plate.**

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

GATHERING MUSIC

Sean Lewis

FRAMING WORDS / WELCOME

Rev. Brent Damrow

GATHERING IN WORSHIP

INTROIT

CONTEMPORARY READING

Brian Farrell

"Love – Acts of God" from *Sermons*, by Peter J. Gomes

I do not believe that God moves in thunderstorms or speaks in the accents of natural disasters. I do not believe that God interferes in the often tragic course of the world's activity; I do not believe that God is a great puppeteer who somehow pulls the strings for good or for bad, depending upon his temper or ours. Rather, I believe that God has made the world and loves it so much that he has given himself into our hands and thus made his work our opportunity. God has chosen not to act in the form of phenomena; he has chosen now to act in the form of men and women who know him, love him, and serve him. By God's love for us in Jesus Christ we are become in ourselves, in our own persons, in our daily work acts of God, evidence, living proof that the God who acted in the lives of the prophets, the martyrs, and the saints still acts in the likes and the lives of us.

We become then, you and I, not simply the objects of a benevolent, a wrathful, or an indifferent God, pieces of furniture to be arranged at will, but rather we are

continued

licensed, as it were, by the incarnation to be the action, the activity of God in the world, for it is through us, our patience, our labor, and our love in a world easily content without God, that God will be known and served; indeed, the Acts of God become the actions of the men and women who know and love, him, and who seek to serve him.

*CALL TO WORSHIP written by L.G. Parkhurst Grace Diggs

One: I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart.

I sing your praise and give thanks for your steadfast love and faithfulness.

You have exalted your name and your word above everything.

All: On the day I called, you answered me.

You increased my strength of soul.

One: Though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly;

but the haughty he perceives from far away.

All: Though I walk in the midst of trouble,

you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies.

You stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me.

One: The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me.

Your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.

All: Do not forsake the work of your hands.

*HYMN *Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling* see page 5

THE GIFT OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Psalm 138 Brian Farrell

I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise;

I bow down toward your holy temple

and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness,

for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.

On the day I called, you answered me; you increased my strength of soul.

All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,

for they have heard the words of your mouth.

They shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord.

For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly,

but the haughty he perceives from far away.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble,

you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;

you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me.
The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

TIME WITH CHILDREN *Forever*

**** Children are invited to participate in an activity. ****

READING Genesis 18:20-32, translation by Everett Fox Grace Diggs

So YHWH said: The outcry in Sodom and Amora – how great it is!

And their sin- how exceedingly heavily it weighs?

Now let me go down and see: if they have done according to its cry that has come to me - destruction! And if not – I wish to know.

The men turned from there and went toward Sodom,
but Avraham still stood in the presence of YHWH.

Avraham came close and said: Will you really sweep away the innocent along with the guilty? Perhaps there are fifty innocent within the city,
will you really sweep it away? Will you not bear with the place because of the fifty innocent that are in its midst?

Heaven forbid for you to do a thing like this, to deal death to the innocent along with the guilty, that it should come about: like the innocent, like the guilty,

Heaven forbid for you! The judge of all the earth – will he not do what is just?

YHWH said: If I find in Sodom fifty innocent within the city,

I will bear with the whole place for their sake. Avraham spoke up, and said:

Now pray, I have ventured to speak to my Lord, and I am but earth and ashes:

Perhaps of the fifty innocent, five will be lacking – will you bring ruin upon the whole city because of the five?

He said: I will not bring ruin, if I find there forty-five. But he continued to speak to him and said: Perhaps there will be found there only forty!

He said: I will not do it, for the sake of the forty. But he said: Pray let not my Lord be upset that I speak further: Perhaps there will be found there only thirty!

He said: I will not do it, if I find there thirty.

But he said: Now pray, I have ventured to speak to my Lord:

Perhaps there will be found there only twenty!

He said: I will not bring ruin, for the sake of the twenty.

But he said: Pray let my Lord not be upset that I speak further just this one

time: Perhaps there will be found there only ten! He said: I will not bring ruin, for the sake of the ten.

SERMON

Arguing with ~~God~~ Ourselves

Pastor Brent

*HYMN

O God Beyond All Praising

see page 6

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

CALL TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY

Sean Lewis

*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

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

GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

INVITATIONS

*HYMN

I Will Give Thanks with My Whole Heart vss. 1, 2, & 5 see page 7

*SHARING OF THE PEACE

*BENEDICTION

Pastor Brent

POSTLUDE

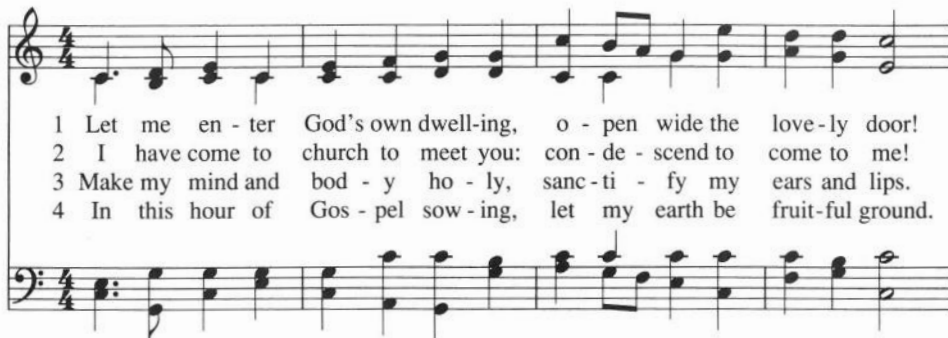
Sean Lewis

Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling

67

Benjamin Schmolck, 1732

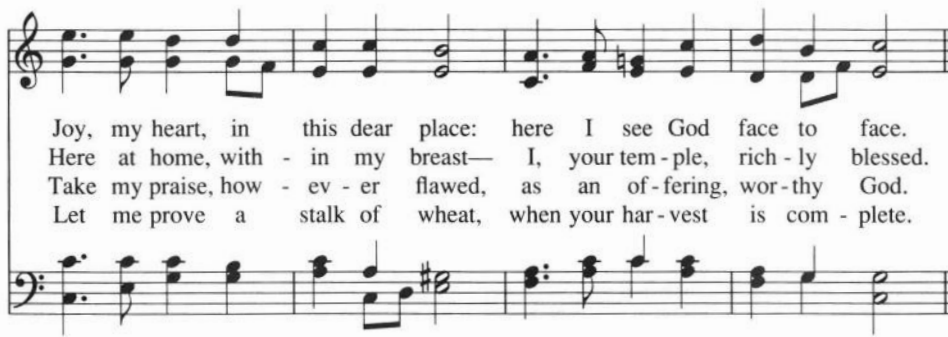
Transl. Madeleine Forell Marshall, 1993



1 Let me en - ter God's own dwell-ing, o - pen wide the love-ly door!
 2 I have come to church to meet you: con - de - scend to come to me!
 3 Make my mind and bod - y ho - ly, sanc-ti - fy my ears and lips.
 4 In this hour of Gos - pel sow - ing, let my earth be fruit-ful ground.



Here, all earth-ly powers ex - cel-ling, God re - ceives the sick and poor.
 Anx - ious, need - y, I en - treat you, come in - side, and wel - come be—
 Lift my spir - it, poor and low - ly, all bright van - i - ties e - clipse.
 In - tel - lec - tual light be - stow-ing, raise my green faith, sweet and sound.



Joy, my heart, in this dear place: here I see God face to face.
 Here at home, with - in my breast— I, your tem - ple, rich - ly blessed.
 Take my praise, how - ev - er flawed, as an of - fering, wor - thy God.
 Let me prove a stalk of wheat, when your har - vest is com - plete.

A native of Silesia, Benjamin Schmolck was ordained a Lutheran pastor. Although he was one of only three clergy serving thirty-six villages, he wrote more than 1,000 hymns. Joachim Neander, an important Reformed musician, wrote the music.

Tune: UNSER HERRSCHER 8.7.8.7.7.7.
Joachim Neander, 1680

The New Century Hymnal (1995)

O God Beyond All Praising

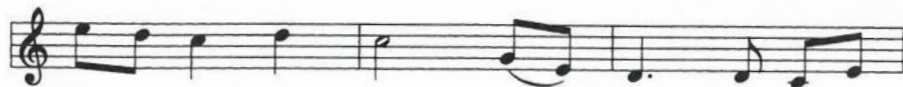
2009



1. O God be-yond all prais-ing, we wor-ship you to -
2. Then hear, O gra-cious Sav-ior, ac-cept the love we



day and sing the love a-maz-ing that
bring, that we who know your fa-vor may



songs can-not re-pay; for we can on-ly
serve you as our king; and whe-ther our to-



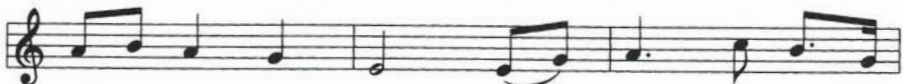
won-der at ev-ery gift you send, at
mor-rows be filled with good or ill, we'll



bles-sings with-out num-ber and mer-cies with-out
tri-umph through our sor-rows and rise to bless you



end: We lift our hearts be-fore you and
still: To mar-vel at your beau-ty and



wait up-on your Word, we hon-or and a-
glo-ry in your ways, and make a joy-ful



dore you, our great and might-y of Lord.
du-ty our sac-ri-fice of praise.

WORDS: Michael Perry (Heb. 13:15)
MUSIC: Gustav T. Holst

THAXTED
13 13.13 13.13 13

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Verses
1, 2, & 5

I Will Give Thanks with My Whole Heart 247

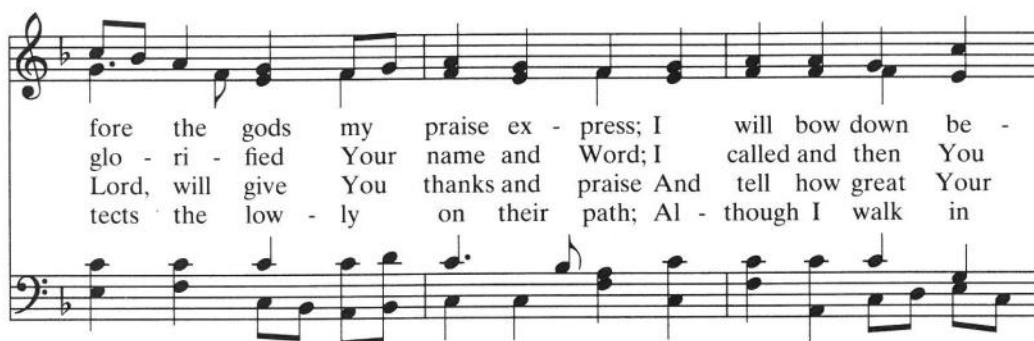
HERR JESU CHRIST LM

Christopher L. Webber, 1986, 1988

Cantionale Germanicum, 1628
Arr. Johann Sebastian Bach, c. 1708



1. I will give thanks with my whole heart, Be -
2. A - bove all things, O Lord, my God, You
3. All kings on earth who hear Your words, O
4. The Lord is high, yet scorns the proud, Pro -



fore the gods my praise ex - press; I will bow down be -
glo - ri - fied Your name and Word; I called and then You
Lord, will give You thanks and praise And tell how great Your
tecs the low - ly on their path; Al - though I walk in



fore Your throne And praise Your love and faith - ful - ness.
an - swered me And gave me in - creased strength, O Lord.
glo - ry is, And they will sing of all Your ways.
trou - ble, Lord, You keep me safe from my foe's wrath.

5. Lord, Your right hand shall save my life
And make Your purpose for me sure;
Do not forsake what You have made;
Your love forever will endure.

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Hymns, Psalms, & Spiritual Songs (1990)

Thank you to all who helped with today's service, including Deacons Gary Cilley, Elizabeth Young, and Helen McCormick; readers Grace Diggs and Brian Farrell; usher Ronnie Cunningham; greeter Don Rodgers; fellowship Stone Soup Group, LLC. Will Curtiss is running the Livestream and Scarlett Ritcher and Rae Geddes are in the nursery. Thanks to Cathy Clark for the flowers.

Church Picnic

TODAY! at 12:00 noon at Mohawk Lake. (weather permitting) If you didn't bring food to grill for yourself, plus a side dish or dessert to share—please come anyway, there is always plenty of food. Drinks, buns, condiments, cutlery, paper goods, and a grill will be provided. Ask an usher for a map, or look on the bulletin board in the JE Room.

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 worshipping 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.

(413) 298-3137 | office@stockbridgeucc.org | stockbridgeucc.org

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