

# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

June 19, 2022

Second Sunday after Pentecost

Father's Day

Juneteenth – Celebrate Freedom

A Service of the Word



*Jesus, the Gerasene, and the Unclean Spirits*

Artist: Luke the Cypriot, 1594

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# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

a just world for all

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A Service of the Word

*"Sometimes in the church it is more frightening to listen to where God may be calling us to be something new than to stick with the old ways, even though they haven't worked as well, because we know them. But we will just continue the pattern of burnout unless we are willing to embrace the transformation God intends for us."*

*~The Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell"*

## WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

*\*please stand as you are able*

### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PRELUDE – *Betty Funk*

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP** *(based on Psalm 42)*

One: As a deer longs for flowing streams of water, our souls reach out to seek our God.

**Many: Where is our God? In the cleansing of the rain, in the refreshing of a pool, in the predictability of a faucet.**

One: With glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, our voices lift toward our God.

**Many: Where is our God? In the melody of voices raised in concert, in the stillness of silence, in the cacophony of spontaneous praise.**

One: As deep calls to deep, we come to worship the Living God.

**Many: Where is our God? In the echoes of our prayers, in the reverence of bowed heads, in the hope of raised faces. The Holy One is with us.**

#### **\*INVOCATION**

Holy Wisdom, we hear you calling us to gather and to hope in your name. Ignite sacred courage in us to proclaim the good news of justice from the comfort of the chapel to the public witness of the city gates. Inspire a compelling vision of a gracious, beloved, and empowered community that propels us to confront inequities, challenge privilege, and participate in your creative work in our time. Renew our hope for humanity so that we might rejoice in this inhabited world and delight in our siblings. Amen.

**\*HYMN – – 4 NCH – Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You vv. 1-3**

**Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You**

Author: Henry van Dyke, 1907; alt.

Tune: HYMN TO JOY 8.7.8.7.D.

Composer: Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824

Adapter and Harmonizer: Edward Hodges, 1846

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**1 Joyful, joyful, we adore you,  
God of glory, God of love;  
Hearts unfold like flowers before you,  
opening to the sun above.  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,  
drive the storms of doubt away;  
Giver of immortal gladness,  
fill us with the light of day.**

**2 All your works with joy surround you,  
earth and heaven reflect your rays,  
Stars and angels sing around you,  
center of unbroken praise.  
Field and forest, vale and mountain,  
flowery meadow, flashing sea,  
Chanting bird and flowing fountain  
teach us what our praise should be.**

**3 You are giving and forgiving,  
ever blessing, ever blessed,  
Well-spring of the joy of living,  
ocean depth of happy rest!  
Loving Spirit, Father, Mother,  
all who love belong to you;  
Teach us how to love each other,  
by that love our joy renew.**

**A READING OF THE WORD**

**FIRST READING: 1 Kings 19:1-15a**

*Prophetic activity in the Hebrew Scriptures tends to rise when rulers are making poor political alliances, turning from God's ways, and ignoring those who are poor. In 1 Kings 19, King Ahab was doing all three—he had followed the ways of his wife, Queen Jezebel, to worship Ba'al, and the worship of Ba'al required human sacrifice. The prophet Elijah had stood against the prophets of B'aal, and in a showdown with 450 of Ba'al's prophets, Elijah had them killed. Jezebel promised death for Elijah, and he fled. In his exhaustion, he fell asleep under a bush, longing to die, but an angel woke Elijah up and commanded him to eat and drink. Elijah ate and drank, slept, was woken again by the angel, and after a second meal was nourished enough to continue his journey. When he came to Horeb, God asked him why he had come. Elijah told God of all that happened, and that he was the only one left faithful to God. Now, just before the incident with the prophets of Ba'al, Obadiah,*

*a servant of King Ahab who was faithful to God, had hid one hundred other prophets of God, fifty to a cave (18:7-15). Elijah was not really alone, but in his exhaustion, he felt alone. He was burned out. And after God passed by Elijah—not in the forces of nature of power and destruction associated with other gods of the day, but in the sound of sheer silence. God listened to Elijah and told him to return to the wilderness of Damascus. In the verses immediately following, God shared the succession plan to Elijah. God still had work for Elijah to do, but now Elijah knew he could go on.*

**19** 1 Now, Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah did, and how he killed all the prophets of Ba'al with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them!"

3 Full of fear, Elijah fled for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his attendant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, YHWH," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

Suddenly an angel of YHWH touched him and said, "Get up and eat."

6 He looked around, and there near his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate the cake and drank the water and then lay down again.

7 The angel of YHWH came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank some more.

Strengthened by that food, he traveled for forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night.

And the word of YHWH came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 Elijah replied, "I have been very zealous for YHWH God Omnipotent. The people of Israel have abandoned your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death by the sword. I am the only one left, and now they're trying to kill me, too."

11 God said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of YHWH, for YHWH is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountain apart and shattered the rocks by YHWH's power—but YHWH was not in the whirlwind. After the wind there was an earthquake—but YHWH was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire—but YHWH was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.\*

13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

14 He replied, "Elijah replied, "I have been very zealous for YHWH God Omnipotent. The people of Israel have abandoned your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death by the sword. I am the only one left, and now they're trying to kill me, too."

15 YHWH told Elijah, "Go back the way you came, to the Desert of Damascus.

**A READING FROM THE PSALMS: Psalms 42-43 (Responsively)**

*Psalms 42 and 43 are paired together as they were originally a single poem with a common refrain in verses 42:5, 11, and 43:5. The psalmist asks in this refrain why their own soul is distressed, but finds encouragement in their hope in God. Psalm 42 begins with the metaphor of a deer longing for flowing streams of water—this is how we long for God. The psalmist longs to experience God while in the midst of sorrow and despair. However, the psalmist knows their hope is in God, and God will save them, even as their enemies taunt them as if God isn't near. In psalm 43, the psalmist demands justice from God, for they have faced oppression and surely God will deliver them. The psalmist gives thanks to God before the altar in worship, for they put their hope in God.*

**42** 1 Like a stag, a doe,  
longing for streams of cool water,  
my whole being longs for you, my God.

**2 My soul aches with thirst for God,  
for a god that lives!**

**When can I go and see God face to face?**

3 My only food, day or night, is my tears;  
they recriminate me:  
“Where is your God?” they say.

**4 These things I remember  
as I pour out my soul like water—  
how I'd go with the crowds  
and lead them into God's house,  
amid cries of gladness and thanksgiving,  
drunk with the dance of celebration.**

5 *“Why so dispirited?” I ask myself.  
“Why so churned up inside? Hope in God!”  
I know I'll praise God once again,  
for you are my Deliverance;  
you are my God.*

**6 This is why my heart despairs:  
I remember other days with you,  
in the land of Jordan, on Mount Hermon  
and the Hill of Mizar.**

7 The primeval Deep is echoing  
in the sound of your waterfalls;  
your torrents rage and break over me,  
overwhelming me.

**8 Every day, God, you ordain your love toward me,  
and during the night you bring me your song.  
In my prayers to the God of my life,**

9 I say to God, my rock:  
“Why have you forgotten me?  
Why do you keep me in mourning,

oppressed by an unseen enemy?"

**10 My bones are shattered by their words,  
foes taunt me constantly:  
"Where is your God?" they say.**

*11 "Why so dispirited?" I ask myself.  
"Why so churned up inside? Hope in God!"  
I know I'll praise God once again,  
for you are my Deliverance;  
you are my God.*

**43** 1 Vindicate me, God!  
Plead my cause before unjust judges!  
Rescue me from a lying, deceitful accuser.  
**2 For you, O God, are my stronghold, my defense.  
Why have you forgotten me?  
Why do you keep me in mourning,  
oppressed by an unseen enemy?**

3 Send forth your light and your truth—  
let them guide me,  
let them bring me to your holy mountain,  
to your dwelling place.

**4 Then at last I'll go up again  
to the altar of God,  
the God of my joy and delight.  
My harp and lyre will sing your praise once again,  
O God, my God.**

*5 "Why so dispirited?" I ask myself.  
"Why so churned up inside? Hope in God!"  
I know I'll praise God once again,  
for you are my Deliverance;  
you are my God.*

#### **GOSPEL READING – Luke 8:26-39**

*The Gospel lessons return to Luke for this season after Pentecost. In these verses in Luke 8, Jesus and the disciples enter Gerasene. This area was populated by mostly Gentiles, and Jesus encounters an individual known to locals as someone possessed, living naked among the tombs. Though the people tried to chain him up, he broke the chains and was driven wild by his demons. Jesus cast out the demons, called Legion, who begged Jesus to cast them into the herd of pigs. The herd rushed into the water and drowned, but the individual put on clothes and began to speak in their right mind. However, the locals were frightened by what Jesus had done, and begged him to leave. Perhaps, even though the locals had been afraid, they knew how to handle an individual with demons—they didn't know what to do with one who had the power of God. The person who had previously been possessed wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus told him to go tell others. The person began to proclaim what Jesus had done for him throughout the region.*

**8** 26 They came to the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 Jesus was stepping from the boat when he was met by a person from the town who was possessed by demons. The demoniac had not worn clothes for a long time, and was homeless, living among the tombs instead.

28 Seeing Jesus, the individual cried out and fell at his feet, shouting loudly, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Only Begotten of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” 29—for Jesus was ordering the unclean spirit to come out of the person. This spirit had seized the demoniac many times in the past, who then needed to be restrained with chains and shackles and kept under guard—yet every time, the possessed person would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into deserted places.

30 “What is your name?” Jesus asked.

“Legion,” it replied, because many demons had entered the person. 31 And they pleaded with Jesus not to order them to depart into the abyss.

32 A large herd of pigs was feeding nearby on the hillside. The demons pleaded with Jesus to allow them to enter the swine, and he gave them permission. 33 The demons left the person and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the hillside into the lake and drowned. 34 When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran away to tell the story in town and throughout the countryside. 35 The local residents came out to see what happened. And as they approached Jesus, they also saw the exorcised person sitting at Jesus’ feet, clothed and of a right mind. And they were afraid. 36 Those who had witnessed it told the others how the possessed one had been made whole. 37 Panic overcame the whole population of the region of the Gerasenes, and they asked Jesus to leave them.

When Jesus had gotten into the boat to leave, 38 the person who had been healed asked to go with him. But Jesus said, “No, 39 go back home and tell everyone what God has done for you.” So the one who had been made whole went off and proclaimed throughout the region what Jesus had accomplished.

## **CHORAL RESPONSE – 283 NCH – Spirit of the Living God**

*Choir: Bob Bucklew, Keith Konet, & Barbara Rossington  
Accompanist: Betty Funk*

## **REFLECTION – What Is Your Name?- The Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

## **SPECIAL MUSIC – Life Force Lullaby – words and music by Lee Matsos, 2020**

*Performed by Lee Matsos*

And even if it takes a million opportunities to be what I'm supposed to be and do what I'm supposed to do

You won't turn me away  
No You won't turn me away

And even if it takes a million lives to find my true self in this crazy world

You won't turn away  
No You won't turn me away

It doesn't matter what I do  
I can't fall out of step with You  
And when the world gets so dark I can't even see  
I know you'll shine a light for me.

And when the earth spins off it's axis you'll be callin' me  
And askin for a favor only I could ever do

You'll lead me by the hand  
Yeah you'll lead me by the hand

And when my boat slips off the edge of the horizon and I fall into a fairytale.

You won't leave me behind  
No You won't leave me behind

It doesn't matter what I do  
I can't fall out of love with you  
And even if the world is ending come tomorrow  
I know Your promises are true

I can't fall out of love with you  
I can't fall out of love with you

It doesn't matter what I do  
I can't fall out of love with you  
And even if the world is ending come tomorrow

I know your promises are true  
I know your promises are true  
I know your promises are true

**\*PRAYER OF RESPONSE**

**When we feel compelled  
to push everything to its limits,  
especially you, Holy One,  
it is enough that your grace  
can slow us down.  
When we stand naked and exposed  
to the buffeting winds  
of our doubts and questions.**



it is enough, Healing Servant,  
that you clothe us in your peace,  
and put our minds at ease.

When we are entangled  
in that legion of worries and fears  
which consume our lives,  
it is enough, Spirit of Silence,  
that you untie the knots  
and set us free.

It is enough,  
God in Community, Holy in One,  
that you are with us  
as we pray in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

**\* HYMN - 485 blue Pilgrim Hymnal – This Is My Father's World**

**This Is My Father's World**

Author: Maltbie D. Babcock, 1858-1901, alt.

Tune: TERRA BEATA 6.6.8.6 D

Composer: Franklin L. Sheppard, 1852-1930

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1 This is my Father's world,  
and to my listening ears  
all nature sings, and round me rings  
the music of the spheres.  
This is my Father's world:  
I rest me in the thought  
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas--  
his hand the wonders wrought.

2 This is my Father's world:  
The birds their carols raise,  
the morning light, the lily bright,  
declare their Maker's praise.  
This is my Father's world:  
He shines in all that's fair;  
in the rustling grass I hear him pass,  
he speaks to me everywhere.

3 This is my Father's world:  
O let me ne'er forget  
that though the wrong seems oft so strong,  
God is the Ruler yet.  
This is my Father's world:  
Why should my heart be sad?

**The Lord is King: let the heavens ring!  
God reigns; let earth be glad!**

### **INVITATION TO GENEROSITY**

The gifts of God come generously and abundantly. We hold, nurture, and amplify them as they are entrusted to our care. We respond faithfully by sharing them for the good of community and creation. In this act of faith and trust, we transform our resources of time, talent, and finances into the good news in the world.

### **THE OFFERTORY – *Betty Funk***

#### **\*PRESENTATION OF OFFERINGS – DOXOLOGY**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, you heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

#### **\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING**

**We give you thanks, God Our Help, for the abundance of the gifts you have planted in us as seeds that we may share in bloom. May these offerings be received and magnified for your glory. Amen.**

### **CHORAL HYMN – Holy, Holy – *words & music by Jimmy Owens, 1972***

*Choir: Bob Bucklew, Keith Konet, & Barbara Rossington  
Accompanist: Betty Funk*

### **THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER – using "debts" and "debtors"**

**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 and ever. Amen.**

## GOING FORTH

### \*PARTING HYMN – 395 NCH – In Christ There Is No East or West

#### **In Christ There Is No East or West**

Author (st. 3): Laurence Hull Stookey, 1987

Author: John Oxenham, 1908; alt.

Stanza 3 © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House;

Word adaptations of Sts. 1, 2, and 4 © 1981 Grace Jones Moore

Tune: ST. PETER C.M.

Composer: Alexander R. Reinagle, 1836

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**1 In Christ there is no East or West,  
in Christ no South or North;  
But one community of love  
throughout the whole wide earth.**

**2 In Christ shall true hearts everywhere  
their high communion find;  
God's service is the golden cord  
close-binding humankind.**

**3 In Christ is neither Jew nor Greek,  
and neither slave nor free;  
For men and women live in God,  
and all are kin to me.**

**4 In Christ now meet both East and West,  
in Christ meet South and North;  
One joyous, true community  
throughout the whole wide earth.**

### \*COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

One: May peace be with you as you confront lies with truth and fear with hope.

**Many: May the Abiding One strengthen us to stand in truth and hope.**

One: May the Living Water refresh us with new streams of righteousness.

**Many: May Wisdom be the voice we follow now as we go out into the world, encouraged  
and emboldened, and renewed. Amen.**

### POSTLUDE – *Betty Funk*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Generosity, Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving, and the Commissioning and Benediction are adapted from *Fear of the Truth: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday after Pentecost/ Proper 7*, written by Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Copyright 2022 Faith INFO Ministry Team, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1100. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this

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Ministers, *All of Us*  
Scott Rosenstein, *Pastor*  
Betty Funk, *Pianist and Music Director*  
Keith Konet, *Council President*



## NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### God is Still Speaking...

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you will find a spiritual home in this United Church of Christ congregation. WELCOME!

**Tithes and Offerings** - Checks and Money Orders can be made payable to: "Zion United Church of Christ" and mailed to:

Zion United Church of Christ  
c/o Keith Konet  
1039 Bridlewood Drive  
Copley, OH 44321

Questions: Contact Keith Konet at 330.604.6939

## Season after Pentecost - Ordinary Time



The longest season of the liturgical calendar is filled with Sundays called "Ordinary Time." **The season - called the Season after Pentecost or Ordinary Time - began with Trinity Sunday and ends with Reign of Christ Sunday (the Sunday before the start of Advent).** If you're like me, you might hear "ordinary time" as "boring time." But that's not the case! The word "ordinary" most likely means "numbered" here (think ordinal numbers), because the Sundays of Ordinary Time are numbered. **In this season we move from concentrating on the event of Christ in the world to focusing toward the impact of being in Christ in the world. A life**

**in the unity of the Trinity is one of being shaped and sent daily in the image and in the purpose of Holy Love.** The liturgical color for this season is green. During the Season after Pentecost, we focus on the life of the Church as it grows in the midst of the world.

*“When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall.*

*Think of it—always.”*

*— Mahatma Gandhi*

## Happy Father’s Day 2022

As the name suggests, **Father’s Day is a special occasion that commemorates fathers and father figures around the world, and acknowledges and honors their efforts and contributions towards raising their children.** Akin to Mother’s Day, this day aims to throw light on the influence fathers have in the lives of their kids, and on the society-at-large. While the dates vary from country to country, the day is largely celebrated on the third Sunday in June. As such, this year, it is celebrated on June 19.



**Sonora Smart Dodd** (February 18, 1882 – March 22, 1978) was the daughter of American Civil War veteran William Jackson Smart, and **was responsible for the founding of Father's Day.** Smart was born in Jenny Lind, Sebastian County, Arkansas on February 18, 1882. In 1889, when Sonora was seven years old, the Smart family moved from Marion, Arkansas, to a farm west of Spokane, Washington.

Smart held her father in great esteem. While hearing a church sermon about the newly recognized Mother's Day at Central Methodist Episcopal Church, Sonora felt strongly that fatherhood needed recognition as well. She approached the Spokane Ministerial Alliance and suggested her own father's birthday, of June 5, as the day of honor for fathers. The Alliance chose the third Sunday in June instead.

**The first Father's Day was celebrated June 19, 1910, in Spokane, Washington.** Although observance of the holiday faded in the 1920s, over time, the idea of Father's Day became popular and embraced across the nation. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson sent a telegraph to Spokane praising Father's Day services. **In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a presidential proclamation declaring the third Sunday of June as Father's Day. In 1972, President Nixon established a permanent national observance of Father's Day to be held on the 3rd Sunday of June each year.**

## Juneteenth – June 19th

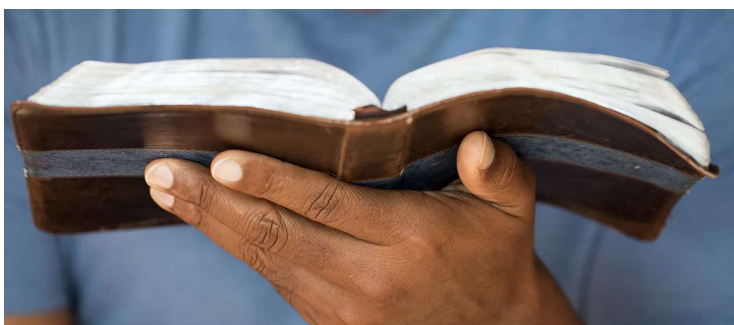


Juneteenth (also called Juneteenth National Independence Day, Jubilee Day, Emancipation Day (TX), Freedom Day, and Black Independence Day) as is **a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans. Juneteenth marks the anniversary of the announcement of General Order No. 3 by Union Army general Gordon Granger**

**on June 19, 1865, proclaiming freedom for enslaved people in Texas. Originating in Galveston, the holiday has been celebrated annually on June 19 in various parts of the United States since the 1860s, often broadly celebrating African-American culture.** The day was first recognized as a federal holiday in June 2021, when President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law.

**Early celebrations date to 1866, at first involving church-centered community gatherings in Texas.** They spread across the South and became more commercialized in the 1920s and 1930s, often centering on a food festival. Participants in the Great Migration out of the South carried their celebrations to other parts of the country. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, these celebrations were eclipsed by the nonviolent determination to achieve civil rights, but grew in popularity again in the 1970s with a focus on African American freedom and African-American arts. **Beginning with Texas by proclamation in 1938, and by legislation in 1979, each U.S. state and the District of Columbia have formally recognized the holiday in some way.** With its adoption in certain parts of Mexico, the holiday became an international holiday. **Juneteenth is celebrated by the Mascogos, descendants of Black Seminoles who escaped from slavery in 1852 and settled in Coahuila, Mexico.**

**Celebratory traditions often include public readings of the Emancipation Proclamation, singing traditional songs such as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Lift Every Voice and Sing", and the readings of works by noted African-American writers, such as Ralph Ellison and Maya Angelou.** Some Juneteenth celebrations also include rodeos, street fairs, cookouts, family reunions, park parties, historical reenactments, and Miss Juneteenth contests. **In 2021, Juneteenth became the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Jr. Day was adopted in 1983**



## What Does the Bible Say About Transgender People (Part 1)

Produced by the HRC Foundation

### Introduction

For several decades, political and theological debates related to LGBTQ+ issues have centered around same-sex relationships for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. While an exploration of that topic is important, the volume of faith resources dedicated to it have often excluded reflection on the unique considerations related to gender identity. Mistakenly, some Christians have suggested that taking the Bible seriously requires people of faith to stand in opposition to the existence, health and humanity of transgender people. Consequently, gender-expansive people of all demographics and Christian traditions have been made to feel that they must choose between their faith and living a whole, healthy and authentic life. Whether you are a ministry leader, the family member of a transgender person or a trans person of faith yourself, this page seeks to serve as a brief overview of the Bible's precedent for affirming the full inclusion of transgender, non-binary and other gender-expansive people in the full life of Christian community.

### The language we use

Sometimes it can feel overwhelming to learn new terms and new concepts, especially if we see those terms change in meaning or use from one context to another. Whether we are talking about transgender issues or about faith, this seems to be true. This resource aims only to offer a starting place for a dialogue on both. For the purposes of our writing, when we use **gender identity** we are referring to one's internal sense of being male, female, both or neither. When we use the phrase "**sex assigned at birth,**" what we mean is the sex that was assigned by a doctor at birth based on some combination of sex chromosomes, genes, gonads and internal and external genitalia, as well as physiological hormones. When we use the word **transgender**, we are describing a person whose gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth. It is an adjective, a descriptive word, and can encompass any variety of non-binary and gender-expansive identities. For example, consider Josh, a transgender man who grew up with his parents assuming he was a girl. For as long as he could remember, he knew himself to be a boy. But he didn't know about transgender people until he was older and could finally see himself in their stories and come out. Or consider Sam, a non-binary person who uses they/them pronouns. Sam grew up being told they were a boy but they never knew themselves to be a boy. They came out as non-binary to reflect their authentic experience with their gender identity.

When we use **gender expression**, we are talking about the way that a person may outwardly reflect their internal sense of gender through presentation, such as through clothing, hair, voice and body language. **Sexual orientation**, which describes whom a person is physically and/or emotionally attracted to, is a separate category, and doesn't influence someone's gender identity or gender expression. It's important to understand that gender expression and sexual orientation are different from gender identity. In our examples above, Josh could be a transgender man who is gay, bisexual or straight. Sam could be a non-binary person who expresses their gender consistently in a more traditionally masculine or feminine way, or neither or both at the same time.

When we use the term **affirming**, what we are referring to is the theological view that all expressions of gender are an integral part of God's design for diversity within the created order. When we use **non-affirming**, we are referring to the theological view that transgender and other expressions of gender variance are either a) sinful within themselves or b) that they are morally neutral but nevertheless a kind of disorder, mental illness or other brokenness. Whether you already feel confident in your position or are searching for new possibilities, our hope is that researching, studying and wrestling with the Scriptures and questions most relevant to trans experiences are part and parcel of what it means for Christians to "love God with all of one's heart, soul, and mind" (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Luke 10:7).

## **Wrestling with Scripture**

### **Creation and the Gender Binary - Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:18-24**

When Christians think about gender, they tend to go back to the beginning. In Genesis, we find two stories about how things came to be, one of which says "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27, NRSV). If you grew up hearing these stories and living with people who seemed to fit inside these gender boxes, the existence of transgender people might seem to fly in the face of God's created order. However, when we look just a little closer at each of these passages we find a much more complex and beautiful world. For instance, when God creates men and women in Genesis 1, it's after creating opposites in every other corner of creation--day and night, land and sea, flying birds and swimming fish. Humans, then, are also created in an opposite pair--male and female. But the problem with a literal reading of this text that even though Genesis 1 sets up these binaries, God's creation exists in spectrums.

In between day and night we have dawn and dusk; between land and sea we have coral reefs and estuaries and beaches; between flying birds and swimming fish we have penguins and high jumping dolphins, not to mention that uncategorizable favorite the platypus! No one would argue that a penguin is an abomination for not fitting the categories of Genesis 1, or that an estuary isn't pleasing to God because it's neither land nor sea. In the same way, God gives every human a self that is unique and may not always fit neatly into a box or binary. Among cisgender people -- that is those whose gender identities align with the sex they were assigned at birth, or non-transgender people -- there is a wide variety in height, strength, hair distribution, size and shape of reproductive organs, and nearly all other physical characteristics, which makes it hard for every single person on earth to fit neatly inside one culture's categories of man or woman. There is, too, a diversity among transgender and non-binary people when it comes to bodies, personalities, beliefs and experiences. But rather than writing Genesis 1 off as fiction that doesn't match reality, many affirming Christians recognize that the stories set down in this chapter were never meant to catalogue all of creation (in which case, it would



just be an encyclopedia), but rather to point us towards God's power and love. Not every microbe and constellation must be named in this chapter in order to have a purpose and a blessing.

Genesis 2 gives us a different perspective on the creation story, and here a non-gendered human is created first and then later a piece of the first person, Adam, is made into the second person, Eve. Based on the order of creation in this story, some theologians argue that this passage upholds a structure called gender complementarity. Gender complementarity asserts that God created two fundamentally different genders which have strict corresponding societal roles; in short, men were created to lead and women were created to follow. We don't have the space here to explore the rich biblical scholarship that has demonstrated the theological and pastoral need for Christian Egalitarianism, but suffice to say these views, even when held with the best intentions, have a consistent history of leading to emotional, spiritual and physical violence against anyone, regardless of their assigned sex or their gender identity or presentation, who does not completely and unwaveringly conform to gendered expectations. Alternatively, moving away from gender complementarity frees Christians up to explore other biblical alternatives for identity, community and relationship--alternatives based on the example Jesus set and called for in his teachings, rather than on gender difference.

One of the ways that Christians have historically understood the existence of suffering in the world is to attribute it to the idea that things are not now as they were originally created before the sin of Adam and Eve later in Genesis. Since the Fall, humans have experienced and caused things that are out of sync with God's plan, and some may question whether the existence of transgender people may be a result of the Fall, rather than something that God intended from the beginning. However, it's important to know that transgender people have existed across cultures and times -- dating back thousands of years. We also know that when it comes to the suffering that transgender and non-binary people experience, most is linked to the stress and oppression caused by other people. Studies show that when transgender people are affirmed and loved, their well-being also benefits. With this in mind, it would be more likely that sin is at play in the oppressive and damaging ways we treat each other, and not in the very fact of someone's existence.

(this series continues next Sunday)

## **Please Remember in Prayer**

- The Universal Church, its members and mission,
- The nation and all in authority, the leaders of our nation - federal, state, and local.
- For democracy and our democratic institutions and norms in the United States.
- The welfare of the world and the concerns of the local community,
- The interrelationship of Gospel values and civic engagement
- Our 155th Anniversary as a community of faith of Zion Church on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- Ministries of the United Church of Christ and of Zion Church.
- The leaders of our church: local, regional, and national, including our Living Water Association UCC, Association General Minister, The Rev. Nayiri Karjian, and Association Faith in Action Minister, The Rev. Michael Howard.
- The ministers and missionaries of the world.
- Those who are refugees and immigrants.
- For children separated from their parents at detention camps along our southern border.
- The families of Ruth Whitfield, 86; Roberta Drury, 32; Aaron Salter, 55; Heyward Patterson,

67; Pearl Young, 77; Geraldine Talley, 62; Celestine Chaney, 65; Katherine Massey, 72; Margus Morrison, 52; and Andre Mackneil, 53 killed last week in a racist-inspired mass shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York.

- The family and friends of John Cheng, 52, killed in a mass shooting at a church reception in Laguna Woods, California on May 15<sup>th</sup>.
- The families and friends of the 19 children (3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> graders) and two teachers murdered in the massacre at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas: Alexandria Aniyah Rubio, 10; Alithia Ramirez, 10; Amerie Jo Garza, 10; Annabell Guadalupe Rodriguez, 10; Eliahana Cruz Torres, 10; Eliana "Ellie" Garcia, 9; Eva Mireles, 44 (fourth grade teacher); Irma Garcia (fourth grade teacher); Jackie Cazares, 10; Jailah Nicole Silguero, 10; Jayce Luevanos, 10; Jose Flores, 10; Layla Salazar, 10; Makenna Lee Elrod, 10; Maite Rodriguez; Miranda Mathis, 11; Nevaeh Bravo; Rojelio Torres, 10; Tess Marie Mata; Uziyah Garcia, 10; and Xavier Lopez, 10.
- The families and friends of those killed in the mass shooting at a medical center in Tulsa, Oklahoma on June 1<sup>st</sup>: two doctors, Preston Phillips, 59 and Stephanie Husen, 48; a receptionist, Amanda Glenn, 40; and a visitor/patient, William Love, 73.
- The families and friends of those killed in the shootings at a potluck dinner on June 16<sup>th</sup> at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Vestavia Hills, Alabama: 84-year-old Walter Rainey, 75-year-old Sarah Yeager and 84-year-old Jane Pounds.
- **May God be revealed in their stories and the tears of all who mourn. May their memory be a blessing and their life in God's good care last forever.**
- For racial and religious justice and reconciliation in the United States and around the world.
- Mother Earth and the global reflection on climate disruption.
- For peace, justice, and freedom throughout the world and particularly for the peoples of Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and the United States.
- The people of Afghanistan, Venezuela, Syria, Yemen, Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Kurdish people and the Christians of northern Syria - for peace, nutrition, and justice.
- The people of Tonga affected by the eruption of an undersea volcano and tsunami flooding.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive, a total of 270 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of June 18th, 2022. In 2021 a total of 693 mass shooting incidents occurred across the US, in 2020 a total of 611, in 2019 a total of 417, with 337 incidents in 2018. While we pray for the families and friends of those whose lives have been taken in violent acts – and we pray for those injured in body, mind, soul, and spirit – and for their neighborhoods and communities across the United States - We know that our words and prayers are not enough. We must repent for our collective inaction and commit to tirelessly working toward meaningful gun violence prevention.
- For those affected by the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and the omicron variant surge: for all those who are infected and/or sick, and those who are grieving, for all who are affected, all around the world, for essential workers and frontline workers...we pray for comfort, for safety, for health, and for wholeness.
- For those affected by recent wildfires around Boulder, Colorado, in California, and in the panhandle of Florida.
- The residents and management of the San Sofia Apartments who share a campus with us.
- Those anticipating surgery, recovering from surgery, or undergoing medical procedures, tests, or treatments
- Those living in assisted living or in a nursing home

- Those who are homebound and those who are caregivers
- Those who suffer or are in any trouble, and the departed.
- Those on our church prayer list:
  - Patti Augustine and family
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) in Alliance, Ohio
  - Betty Funk (*our Minister of Music*)
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob; friend of Elaine – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara, and Michael Reed.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet
  - Keith Konet
  - Marcia Leslie (*neighbor and friend – health concerns*)
  - Elaine Lukacs (*fell at home and injured her knee and leg, presently at O'Neill Healthcare, Room 103, 7250 Old Oak Blvd., Middleburg Heights, Ohio 44130 – 440.863.5624*)
  - Linda and James Mortach (*Elaine Lukacs' sister & brother-in-law*) & Linda's daughter
  - Patricia Matheny (prayers also for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray)
  - Lee Matsos and family
  - Barbara Rossington (*move to a new senior housing community*)
  - Henry Senyak (*resident community leader – cancer*)
  - The family of Michael O'Brien particularly his wife, Debbie Webb (*following Michael's death last Fall. Our love and sympathy to Debbie and Michael's family*).
  - Beverly Wurm (*recovering*)
  - Kim (*friend of Bev Wurm – cancer*)

## Help for Ukraine

Gifts made to UCC **Ukraine Emergency Appeal** will provide shelter, food, and other care to war refugees and internally displaced people.

Donate online with the link below:

<https://support.ucc.org/global-h-o-p-e/ukraine-emergency-appeal>

Or designate a check for Ukraine Relief and mail to:

United Church of Christ,  
P.O. Box 71957  
Cleveland, OH 44194.



Gifts made to **Sharing America's Resources Abroad (S.A.R.A)** provide food, clothing, and sanitary items for refugees fleeing to Hungary.

**Donate online with the link:**

[https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted\\_button\\_id=QC5P9F6Z9LT32](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=QC5P9F6Z9LT32)

Or designate a check for **S.A.R.A. - Donations for Ukraine Emergency Fund** and mail to:

SARA  
c/o Heartland Conference UCC  
P.O. Box 1230  
Worthington, OH 43085.

**Please know that your gifts of any size make a difference in this critical time.**