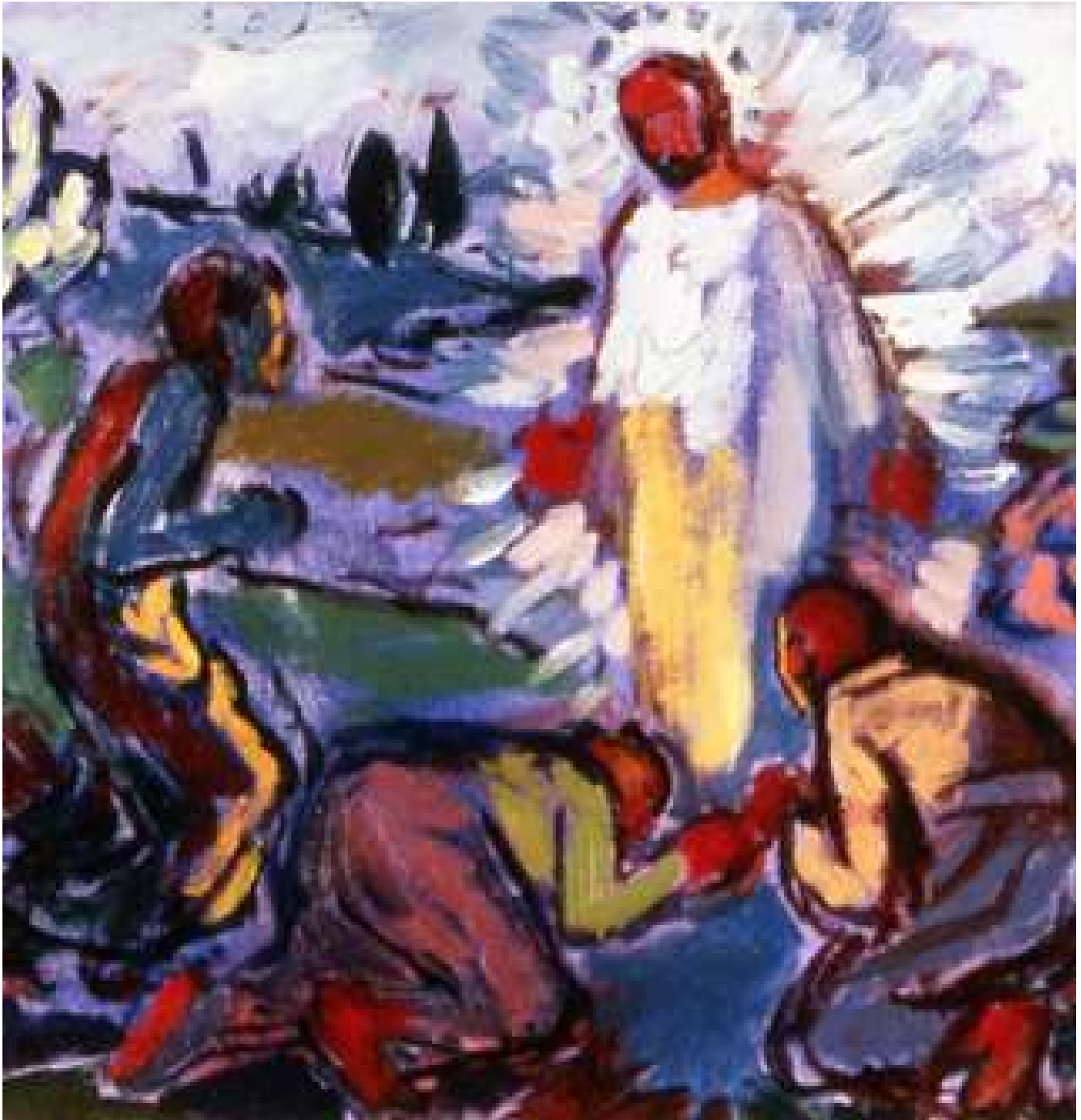


ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

June 26, 2022

Third Sunday after Pentecost

A Service of the Word



Artist: Unknown

*“The Cost of Discipleship,” 6/9/19,
Trinity Presbyterian Church, NY,*

<https://www.trinitychurchny.com/sermons/the-cost-of-discipleship/>



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

a just world for all

June 26, 2022
Third Sunday after Pentecost
A Service of the Word

*“Becoming a disciple of Jesus is about following Jesus and becoming a student (that’s what “disciple” means, after all).
Becoming a student of the Way of Christ means having the power and authority that God has given us
but not using it in a way of domination and superiority, or even violence and fear,
but using power and authority to free us all to love one another.”
— 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: With these people, in this space,
we come to learn from God.

**Many: To discover how to share love and grace
with the same abandon as God.**

One: In this space, in these moments,
we come to follow Jesus.

**Many: We would welcome others with joy and hope
even as he received everyone who came to him.**

One: In these moments, with these people,
we come to bear the Spirit's bounty.

**Many: To be patient with those who aggravate us,
even as the Spirit is kind in looking past our lives.**

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**We have chosen to love you,
God of wonder,**

not just the smallest part
when we think of you once
in a while or call out your name,
but all of you:
the grace which wraps us like a shawl,
the safe space you offer when we are scared,
the joy which teaches us new songs.

We have chosen to follow you,
Jesus our Guide, our Brother,
not just the baby steps
of faith when we are just
starting the journey with you,
but all of you:
the steep hill of discipline
 which leads to self-denial,
the bumpy road potholed with fears
 which leads to trust,
the dusty way of death
 which leads to life.

We have chosen to learn from you,
Wisdom of the universes,
not just the letters of grace,
and the numerals of wonder,
but all of you:
the passion of your heart for others,
 which teaches us justice;
the skills of reconciliation,
 so we can build bridges, not walls;
the songs resounding in your soul,
 so we can bear fruit for those around us.

We have chosen you, all of you,
God in Community, Holy in One,
so hear us as we pray in Jesus' name.
Amen,

***HYMN – 439 – A Mighty Fortress Is Our God**

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Author: Martin Luther, c. 1529

Translator: Frederick H. Hedge, 1853

Adapter: Ruth Duck, 1981

Tune: EIN' FESTE BURG (isometric)8.7.8.7.6.6.6.6.7.

Composer: Martin Luther, c. 1529

Source: Harm. The New Hymnal for American Youth, 1930, alt.

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**1 A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our present help, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
does seek to work us woe;
with craft and power great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth without an equal.**

**2 Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
but there is one who takes our side,
the One of God's own choosing.
You ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, sets us free!
With mighty power to save,
Victorious over the grave;
Christ will prevail triumphant.**

**3 And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
the truth to triumph through us.
The powers of evil grim,
we tremble not for them;
their rage we can endure,
for lo, their doom is sure;
one little word shall fell them.**

**4 That Word beyond all earthly powers
forever is abiding;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours,
for Christ is with us siding.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill;
God's truth shall triumph still;
God's reign endures forever!**

A READING OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: 1 Kings 19:15-16, 19-21

This reading picks up right where the first reading last week left off, after the prophet Elijah's epic burnout. Elijah was exhausted from Ahab and Jezebel's oppression, and in this section, God shares the succession plan with Elijah: he is to go on and anoint a new king of Aram, a new king of Israel, and a new prophet to take his place. When Elijah left, he found Elisha plowing a field. Elijah threw his mantle over Elisha, a

symbol that Elisha was now under the care of Elijah. Elisha longed to go tell his parents goodbye, and Elijah explained he's not keeping him from them in his call to the prophetic work. Elisha prepared a farewell feast for his community, then followed Elijah.

19 15 YHWH told Elijah, "Go back the way you came, to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazeel as ruler of Aram 16 Also anoint Jehu ben-Nimshi as ruler over Israel, and anoint Elisha ben-Shaphat, from Abel Meholah, to succeed you as prophet.

19 So Elijah went from there and found Elisha ben-Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him.

20 Elisha immediately left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my parents good-bye," he said, "and then I will come with you."

"Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?"

21 So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and become his servant.

A READING FROM THE PSALMS: Psalm 16 (Responsively)

Psalm 16 is paired with the 1 Kings 19 reading, a song of faith in God even in difficult times. God is the one who gives counsel, whose presence is steadfast. The psalmist sings of the joy of following God's ways and knowing God will deliver them. Unlike those who worship other gods, the psalmist remains faithful because God is always faithful.

16 1 O God, keep me safe—
you are my refuge!
**2 I said to God, "You are my God;
there is nothing good for me apart from you."**

3 The holy people of my land are wonderful!
My greatest pleasure is to be with them.
**4 But those who rush after other gods
will bring many troubles upon themselves.
I will not take part in their sacrifices;
I won't even speak the names of their gods.**

5 You, God, are all that I have,
you are my food and drink.
My life is safe in your hands.
**6 Within the boundaries you set for me
there are nothing but pleasant places!
What a delightful inheritance I have!**

7 I praise God, who guides me;
even at night my heart teaches me.

**8 I'm always aware of your presence;
you are right by my side,
and nothing can shake me.**

9 My heart is happy and my tongue sings for joy;
I feel completely safe with you,

**10 because you won't abandon me to the Grave;
you won't let your loved one see decay.**

**11 You show me the path to Life;
your presence fills me with joy,
and by your side I find enduring pleasure.**

SECOND READING – Galatians 5:1, 13-25

In the Christian Letter selection from Galatians 5, the apostle Paul writes of the freedom in Christ to a community still dividing on historic cultural lines. Paul writes of living by the Spirit as living in a way that lives out the commandments, as opposed to a literal legal understanding that Paul argued against (and we must remember not all Jewish people understood the law in a strict legalistic way). However, Paul is also concerned with those who would then toss out the law—instead, the law is summed up by Jesus as “love your neighbor as yourself.” Paul writes against those who would simply argue that they are saved by Christ and can do whatever they want. Rather, they are no longer under the law, but the law is lived out and is known by the fruits of the Spirit, and there is no law against living in kindness, gentleness, self-control, etc. When one lives by the Spirit they are guided by the Spirit and live as Christ lived.

5 1 When Christ freed us, we were meant to remain free. Stand firm, therefore, and don't submit to the yoke of slavery a second time!

13 My sisters and brothers, you were called to freedom; but be careful, or this freedom will provide an opening for self-indulgence. Rather, serve one another in works of love, 14 since the whole of the Law is summarized in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 If you go on snapping at one another and tearing each other to pieces, be careful, or you may end up destroying the whole community.

16 Let me put it this way: if you are guided by the Spirit, you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence. 17 Since our flesh is at odds with the Spirit—and the Spirit with our flesh—the two are so opposed that you cannot do whatever you feel like doing. 18 If you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

19 It's obvious what proceeds from the flesh: lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, arguments, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies and so forth. I warn you as I have warned you before: those who do these sorts of things won't inherit the kingdom of God!

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against these sorts of things there is no law! 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their ego, with its passions and desires. 25 So since we live by the Spirit, let us follow her lead. 26 We must stop being conceited, contentious and envious.

GOSPEL READING – Luke 9:51-62

The Gospel shifts as Jesus sets his path toward Jerusalem, and these verses focus on following Jesus in two parts. In verses 51-56, the disciples are with Jesus visiting various villages, and they visit a Samaritan village but are not welcomed by them. Samaritans were those who lived in the northern kingdom after Solomon's reign when Israel split into two. They had their own temple in Samaria instead of Jerusalem and believed that only the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) were scripture. They were often in tension with the rest of the Jewish community, and when Jesus was prepared to move on to Jerusalem, they rejected him. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are known as the "Sons of Thunder" in Mark 3:17. Perhaps this nickname was for their temperament as they asked Jesus if they could call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritan village. But Jesus rebukes them. Following Jesus is not about power and authority over others: it is about sharing the power and authority of Christ in changing lives.

In verses 57-62, Jesus encounters others on the road who want to follow Jesus, but don't understand what discipleship is, either. These people want to follow Jesus, but something is holding them back. Jesus warned the first one who asked that they will not feel settled—there will be no place of rest if they choose to follow Jesus. It is assumed by scholars that the one who asked about burying his father was waiting until his father died before he could follow Jesus. The third wanted time to say goodbye, but if one wants to follow Jesus, they cannot allow anything to hold them back. Again, following Jesus is about changed lives—however, the inner transformation Jesus offers is not something everyone desires.

9 As the time approached when he was to be taken from this world, Jesus firmly resolved to proceed toward Jerusalem 52 and sent messengers on ahead. They entered a Samaritan town to make preparations for him, 53 but the Samaritans wouldn't welcome Jesus because his destination was Jerusalem.

54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Rabbi, do you want us to call down fire from heaven and destroy them?" 55 But Jesus turned and reprimanded them. 56 Then they set off for another town.

57 As they were making their way along, they met a fellow traveler who said to Jesus, "I'll follow you wherever you go."

58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have lairs, the birds of the sky have nests, but the Chosen One has nowhere to rest."

59 To another traveler Jesus said, "Follow me."

The traveler replied, "Let me bury my father first."

60 Jesus said in return, "Let the dead bury their dead; you go and proclaim the reign of God everywhere."

61 Yet another traveler approached Jesus in this way: "I'll be your follower, Rabbi, but first let me say goodbye to my people at home."

62 Jesus answered, "Whoever puts a hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the reign of God."

CHORAL RESPONSE – 283 NCH – Spirit of the Living God

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

REFLECTION - The Call to Urgency and Passion – The Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

***PRAYER OF RESPONSE**

Spirit of the living God,
fall upon us like dew in the morning.
Refresh us and revive us.
In a world of destruction and chaos,
death and despair,
breathe life into us.
Mold courage into our hearts.
Pour out your love into our veins
to move our bodies for justice.
Spirit of the living God,
bring us back to life,
and help us to share
your life abundantly.
Amen.

*** HYMN - 493 NCH – O Jesus, I Have Promised**

O Jesus, I Have Promised

Author: John E. Bode, 1868; alt.

Tune: ANGEL'S STORY 7.6.7.6.D.

Composer: A.H. Mann, 1883

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**1 1 O Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
remain forever near me,
my Savior and my Friend;
I shall not fear life's struggles
if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if you will be my guide.**

**2 O let me hear you speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will!
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control!**

O speak, and make me listen,
O guardian of my soul!

3 O Jesus, you have promised
to all who follow you
that where you are in glory
your servant shall be, too;
And, Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow
my Savior and my Friend!

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

Jesus invites us to follow him in all ways, including the use and sharing of our resources. An accounting of our time, talent, and treasure that reflects our active citizenship in the kingdom brings glory to the Holy One. These seeds bear fruit.

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

Giver of Gifts, receive the resources we bring. May they bless our community and our world. May bonds of scarcity be broken as we meet the needs around us with the gifts that you have first given to us. May we be gladdened by giving and rejoice in generosity. Amen.

CHORAL HYMN – 423 NCH – Great Is Your Faithfulness

Author: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1923; alt. – Composer: William H. Runyan, 1923

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 – 419 – Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)

Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)

Author: Martin Rinkart, 1647

Translator: Catherine Winkworth, 1858, alt.

Tune: NUN DANKET 6.7.6.7.6.6.6.6.

Composer: Johann Crüger, 1647

Harmonizer: Felix Mendelssohn, 1840

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1 Now thank we all our God
with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices,
Who, from our parents' arms,
has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

2 O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
And keep us still in grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

3 All praise and thanks to God
our Maker now be given,
To Christ, and Spirit, too,
our help in highest heaven,
The one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore.
For thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

German:
**Nun danket alle Gott,
mit Herzen, Mund und Händen,
der grosse Dinge tut an uns
und allen Enden;
der uns von Mutterleib
und Kindesbeinen an
unzähl'g viel zu gut
bis hierher hat getan.**

***COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION**

One: There is so much loneliness and brokenness in the world.

Many: We will go to share God's love and kindness to all.

One: There is so much injustice and exclusion around us.

Many: We will join Jesus in welcoming those who have been forgotten.

One: There is so much cruelty and violence in so many places.

Many: We will share the peace of the Spirit with everyone we meet.

One: So may it be!

Many: Amen.

POSTLUDE – Betty Funk

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Prayer for the Day, and Commissioning and Benediction are adapted *Alternate texts liturgy w/communion for June 26, 2022 (Pentecost 3/Trinity 2/Proper 8/Ordinary 13 - B)*, written by the Rev. Thom M. Shuman and posted June 20, 2022 on his blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for June 26, 2022—Third Sunday after Pentecost*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, and posted June 17, 2022 on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lution.org/>
- (3) The Invitation to Generosity and the Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving are adapted from *Freedom and Fruit: Service Prayers for the Third Sunday after Pentecost*, 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 material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.
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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

Please join us for Lunch, Coffee, and Discussion

of an Exciting Possible Opportunity for the Church, following worship today. Thank you to Bob Bucklew for the lunch today.

Season after Pentecost - Ordinary Time

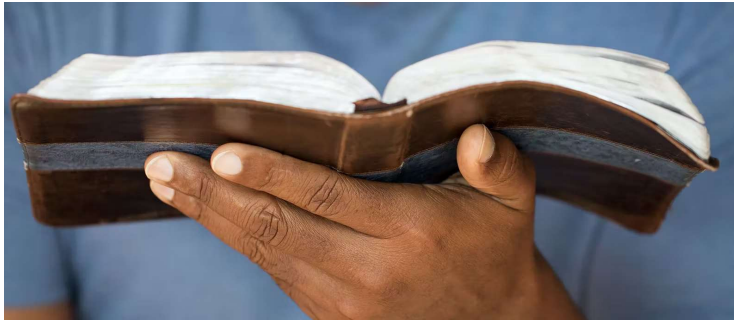


The longest season of the liturgical calendar is filled with Sundays called "Ordinary Time." **The season - called the Season after Pentecost or Ordinary Time - began with Trinity Sunday and ends with Reign of Christ Sunday (the Sunday before the start of Advent).** If you're like me, you might hear "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



What Does the Bible Say About Transgender People (Part 2)

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

Clothing and gender expression - Deuteronomy 22:5

Deuteronomy 22:5, "A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the LORD your God," (NRSV) is the only verse in all of Scripture that directly references gender-based notions of clothing. While in many cases transgender people are not in fact "cross-dressing" (a term that implies one is crossing their gender identity rather than confirming it), but instead are affirming and reflecting their gender identity through the clothes they wear. This verse has still served as a stumbling block for enough Christians to warrant some exploration. Both affirming and non-affirming biblical scholars have a range of views on why this prohibition was written for its original audience. Some are convinced that forbidding the Hebrew people from dressing in clothes associated with a gender different than their own was a way to be set apart from Canaanite and Syrian religion where this phenomena was a part of certain worship rituals. Other scholars believe the prohibition was more of a way to reinforce previous instructions from the Torah that forbid "mixing" (for example, not blending fabrics, planting variations of seed or eating shellfish), given the way Israel's national purity and their maintenance of rigid categorical differences were bound together. A third perspective is that Deuteronomy 22:5 was written to keep a gender-segregated society truly segregated. This would prevent things like men and women engaging in various forms of forbidden sexual contact, women from entering the temple, men evading military service, women signing up for military service and other behaviors perceived as contrary to the boundaries between the distinct parts of God's created order.

Beyond understanding why this verse was originally penned, a more pressing question for Christians to ask is whether or not we are supposed to follow the prohibitions present throughout all of Deuteronomy. The answer for most Christians today would be no, on account of the theological conviction that Jesus, through his life and death, has fulfilled the requirements of the laws Moses presented at Mt. Sinai in the story of Exodus and because they do not believe that maintaining the integrity of God's creation prohibits mixing. In fact, the incarnation of God as Jesus, the mixing of the fully divine

and the fully human, is often viewed as the necessary context for humanity's salvation altogether. Christians who maintain non-affirming perspectives on transgender and non-binary people must ask themselves why it is that this command is being upheld when they believe that most, if not all, of the other directives around it have been nullified.

Changing names - Genesis 32:28; Numbers 13:16; Matthew 16:17-18

Names are very important and in many cultures they are inseparable from how people connect with one another and establish meaning for their lives. While some transgender and non-binary people do not feel that affirming their gender identity requires a change in name or pronouns, many do. To this end, it feels important to lift up the way that Scripture is filled with stories of people having their name changed as well as stories of people changing the name by which they called upon God. These stories demonstrate that name change can be about proclaiming who one is to become, recognizing and confirming who one has always been or some combination of the two. In **Genesis 32** we read of a fearful patriarch, Jacob, on a pilgrimage back to his family from whom he was estranged several years prior as the result of his own wrong-doing. The night before he returns, Jacob is awoken by an attacker, a man whom he wrestles until daybreak leaving him with a displaced hip, a new name and a blessing. Through the violent encounter Jacob is told he will now be called Israel, because he had "struggled with God and with humans and [had] overcome" (Gen 32:28, NIV). While the name Israel is interpreted differently from scholar to scholar, for the most part, it seems to confirm the longer character arc of Jacob, and perhaps the nation of Israel as a metaphor for a community that has indeed long struggled with God and yet persevered.

In Genesis 16 Hagar, the slave of Abram and Sarai, runs away after severe mistreatment and in the wilderness encounters an angel of God. The angel offers encouraging words and consequently Hagar changes God's name to El-roi, meaning "one who sees." This does not shift God's identity so much as it confirms something poignant about God's character that Hagar had not fully recognized before. Immediately following this story, we see in Genesis 17 a reaffirmation of the promises God made previously to Abram and Sarai. In this passage, God changes Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of many nations" and the name of Sarai to Sarah, possibly meaning "princess of many."

In Numbers 13 we read the story of Moses changing the name of Hoshea, son of Nun, to Joshua, and from there becoming the second-in-command to Moses. Similarly, **Matthew 16** describes the interaction between Jesus and Simon where his name is changed to Peter, as a signal that he is to be "the rock" and foundation of the church. The Bible establishes a precedent that name changes can be either an uncovering of who God has always seen a person to be, or as the recognition of a new identity and a new beginning. These too are important principles at play for many transgender and non-binary people in being able to affirm their gender identities with themselves, with their communities and ultimately with God.

Eunuchs as an example of gender diversity - Deuteronomy 23:1; Isaiah 56:1-8; Matthew 19:12; Acts 8:26-40

The word "transgender" is relatively new, but it speaks to a host of age-old experiences. If you got in a time machine and interviewed people in the Bible, you wouldn't find anyone who would use this word, because it didn't exist, but you'd still find transgender and non-binary people. Some trans biblical scholars today are especially interested in the experiences of people in scripture referred to as "eunuchs."

Typically, eunuchs were people who were assigned male at birth who had their reproductive organs changed or removed prior to puberty, but the word “eunuch” in the ancient world would also sometimes be used for those who we would now call intersex. Trans scholars today aren’t interested in these individuals because they believe that eunuchs identified as transgender, but rather because some of the things the eunuchs in scripture experienced are similar to what trans people -- and intersex people -- experience today, particularly in terms of discrimination, oppression and dehumanization.

In Deuteronomy 23:1 a law forbids people assigned male at birth who had their reproductive organs crushed or cut off from being part of the community of Israel. This meant that there were probably relatively few eunuchs in Israelite communities for many years, and they’re mentioned rarely. However, once the Israelites were captured by Babylon and Persia, two cultures in which castration was more common, we begin to see more stories concerning eunuchs and their position in society. We see that eunuchs are allowed to move back and forth between men’s and women’s spaces, that they take on tasks and roles related to both genders, and because they were either intersex or physically changed before puberty they often looked different from cisgender men and women. This was normal in Babylonian and Persian society, but still looked down on by the Israelites.

Once the people of Israel are freed from captivity, several prophets, including Isaiah, guide them in the rebuilding of their homeland. In **Isaiah 56:1-8** God speaks through Isaiah and says that even though Deuteronomy 23 outlawed the participation of eunuchs in Israelite society, in the new Israel they will have a special place--God says, “I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off” (Isaiah 56:5, NRSV). This wide welcome would have been a relief for the eunuchs, but warring theological factions meant that as far as we know, this prophecy was never fulfilled.

Many years later, Jesus mentions eunuchs in **Matthew 19:12**, where he notes that there are many kinds of eunuchs, including “eunuchs who have been so from birth,” “eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others,” and “eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (NRSV). While the first group might include intersex people, and the second group people who were castrated by force, Christians have been arguing for centuries about who might be included in that third category. Regardless of whom he was referencing, what we do know is that in this moment, Jesus first of all does not denigrate eunuchs like others in his society may have done, and beyond that he actually lifts eunuchs up as a positive example. The fact that Jesus positively mentions people who are gender-expansive in his own time and place gives hope to many gender-expansive people today.

Finally, we see another important eunuch in **Acts 8:26-40** who travels all the way from Ethiopia hoping to worship in the temple in Jerusalem, and who meets Philip, one of Jesus’ followers, on the way home. Up to that point, we don’t have a record of eunuchs becoming part of the early Christian church, but in this story in Acts we hear about this Ethiopian eunuch who, after hearing about Jesus, asks Philip “What is to prevent me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36, NRSV). While Philip could have said that there was no precedent for this situation--that the Ethiopian’s ethnicity as a non-Israelite or his identity as a eunuch might indeed prevent him--instead, Philip baptizes him with no questions asked and no strings attached. This story of a gender-expansive person of color welcomed as one of the first Christian converts is a powerful part of our spiritual history.

(this series continues next Sunday)

Pastor Scott Rosenstein and Bob Bucklew will be on vacation

and out-of-state **June 29th – July 6th** with very limited access to phone, text, or internet. In case of pastoral need during this time, please contact Zion Church Council President Keith Konet at 330.604.6939. For routine matters, please e-mail tremont701@gmail.com – or leave a message on the church phone number: 216.273.7561. Pastor Scott can return e-mails, calls, and texts following his return to the office on July 7.



Guest Preacher Next Sunday, July 3rd, 2022

Is the **Rev. Doug Horner** of Ohio City. Rev. Horner is an ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ, US Marine Corp. veteran, Advocate for our Homeless neighbors, and served as Senior Pastor of St. Paul's Community UCC of Ohio City for 17 years of ministry – retiring in 2020. St. Paul's, with roots in the Inner City Protestant Parish movement of the 1950s, has always been a community center as well as a worshiping congregation. It hosts daytime drop-in programs, a thrift shop, free meals, after-school youth activities, occasional evening "coffee house" performances and more. Rev. Horner most recently served as an active staff volunteer on the Justin Bibb campaign for Cleveland Mayor. Please give Rev. Horner a very warm Zion Church welcome!

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 15th, 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 15th.
- The families and friends of the 19 children (3rd & 4th 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 the those killed in the mass shooting at a medical center in Tulsa, Oklahoma on June 1st: 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 16th 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 283 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of June 25th, 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.
- 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*)

**Celebrating the 65th Anniversary of
the United Church of Christ
June 25, 1957 – June 25, 2022**

*It seemed so easy, or at least logical at the time**



The ecumenical momentum of the early twentieth century propelled four denominations together within two and a half short decades. The Congregational and Christian denominations seemed scarcely to have any differences. The Reformed Church of the United States and the Evangelical Synod of North America shared a German ecumenical heritage and courageously united before sorting out their common beliefs and organizational form under which they would live together. Almost immediately, encouraged by their success, the two new churches began to talk to one another. Though the road to their union would prove unexpectedly rough, it did not take them long, in the great sweep of Christian history, to form the United Church of Christ. Represented among these four traditions are almost all of the diverse streams of the Reformation. Could this new American denomination be the one to heal these old, old breaches of Christian community? It seemed that perhaps, it might.

Perhaps it could have done this if these theological and organizational differences were all that needed healing in the post-World War II world. Already in the conversations about union, the four denominations encountered divisions of class and culture. Soon after the new denomination settled the matter of a constitution and a statement of faith, the question of race surfaced. Could a church talk creditably about unity, human or ecclesiastical, while it remained divided by race? The UCC had been, it turned out, a union forged largely by white folks. It did not occur to most of the white majority to ask about the question of race in this great project of Christian unity.



The ink was scarcely dry on the Statement of Faith, when another question arose in the context of a larger cultural debate about language and gender. Did the Statement of Faith, or indeed any Christian statement, include women? As the white race presumed to include or represent the others, so men represented women and no one was aware of an alternative! Thus class, race, and gender divisions in American culture and all of humanity sought consideration by those who prayed with Christ.

Other divisions appeared: divisions of sexual orientation, biblical interpretation, language, generation, region, and politics and polity. If the United Church of Christ claimed as its vocation the unity of the Church, it did so just in time to face the late twentieth century onslaught of plurality in, and division of, humanity.

The ideal that seemed so easy at first challenged the denomination to its core. Could the simple four stream history of the United Church of Christ carry the freight of healing a far wider range of division? It is as if the United Church of Christ, in its formation, attempted the culmination of several movements in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century blending together the ecumenical optimism, the evangelical enthusiasm for the growth of Christianity, the liberal theological aim of making Christian thought accessible to the modern mind, and the social gospel's concern for human justice, only to find that this culmination happened just as three of these movements collapsed as driving forces in American and, perhaps, also world Christianity.

... three issues that confronted and challenged this new denomination at every level and step, and which are still present today: race, peace/war, and immigration. While these were not the only issues that kept some individual churches from joining the United Church of Christ (law suits to prevent the union began as early as 1948), they remained contentious among clergy and laity into the twenty-first century and our 65th year.

Below are a few early milestones that provided a foundation for the new denomination's future action for justice, or a slippery slope into cultural relativity, depending on your theological understanding.

- **1959 Southern television stations impose a news blackout on the civil rights movement. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. asks the UCC to intervene. The UCC Office of Communications wins in federal court a ruling that the airways are public, not private, property.**
- **1966 Ordination of the first Latino minister in the continental US.**
- **1969 General Synod calls for withdrawal from Vietnam and support of US policies to lessen rivalries in Middle East.**
- **1971 Created a Task Force on the Role and Status of Women in the Church and Society.**
- **1971-1980 Gregory Congregational Church in Wilmington NC stormed by National Guard troops. Among those arrested and imprisoned, Ben Chavis, a field worker for the UCC Commission for Racial Justice. The UCC provides legal assistance and moral and financial support for all ten charged.**
- **1972 Ordination of the first openly gay minister.**
- **1976 General Synod elects as President first African American leader of a racially integrated mainline church in US.**
- **1977 Decision to develop a Book of Worship with inclusive language.**
- **1985 General Synod affirms the UCC as a Just Peace Church.**
- **1995 General Synod affirms the dignity and self-worth of immigrants.**
- **2005 General Synod passes a resolution supporting same-gender marriage equality.**

**adapted from Excerpts from The Evolution of a UCC Style: Essays in the History, Ecclesiology, and Culture of the United Church of Christ, Randi Jones Walker, United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 2005 and www.ucc.org.*



Happy Independence Day – July 4th, USA

Wishing our nation and its peoples a healthy and happy celebration of the USA's Independence Day. Our thanks to God for God's many blessings to the United States of America and its people these past 246 years.

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

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.