



THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CANTON CENTER, CT

April 30, 2023 ~ 10:00 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of Easter



This day we say grateful

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~ ORDER OF WORSHIP ~

**Please stand if able.*

***Bold** denotes unison response.*

CHIMES

Karen Needham

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Brief announcements from the congregation are welcome. **Those wishing to make an announcement** are asked to be in the front pews at the start of the announcement period. **Prayer request cards** may be found on the tables at the back of the church. **Offerings** may be placed in the marked boxes on the tables at the back or front of the church.*

PRELUDE

Hallelujah

Leonard Cohen arr. Joel Raney

Cherry Brook Chimes Handbell Choir

CALL TO WORSHIP

Casey Levine

Thanks be to God for the gift of this day,

and for all it will hold.

Thanks be to God for the blessing of community,

and for all we share.

Thanks be to God for calling us together,

in faith, hope and love,

giving us strength for our present journeys

and courage for next ones.

In all that changes and in all that abides,

God is in the midst of us and we are in the midst of God.

***HYMN**

Gather Us In

Chalice (blue), 284

Here in this place, the new light is streaming, shadows of doubt are vanished away.

See in this space our fears and our dreamings,

brought here to you in the light of this day.

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken, gather us in, our spirits inflame.

Call to us now, and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young, our lives are a mystery; we are the old, who yearn for your face.

We have been sung throughout all of history,

called to be light to the whole human race.

Gather us in, the rich and the haughty, gather us in, the proud and the strong;

Give us a heart so meek and so slowly; give us the courage to enter the song.

*Here we receive new life in the waters, here we receive the bread of new birth;
Here you shall call your songs and your daughters,
Call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion, give us to eat the bread that is you;
Nourish us well and teach us to fashion lives that holy & hearts that are true.*

*Not just in buildings small and confining, not in some heaven lightyears away,
Here in this place the new light is shining:
Now is God present and now is the day!
Gather us in and hold us forever, gather us in and make us your own;
Gather us in, all peoples together, fire of love in our flesh and our bone.*

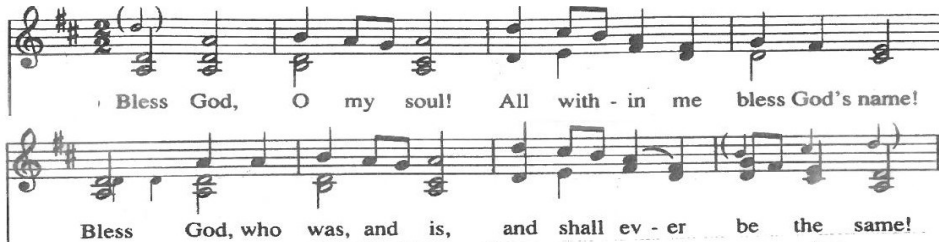
***GATHERING PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Loving Spirit, in us, around us, among us,
on this day may we rest in your love,
as it gathers us, blesses us, sends us.
In all days and through all seasons,
may we trust in your grace,
as it carries us through our transitions –
through endings and beginnings,
through calm times and anxious ones.
In all that changes and in all that abides,
may our hearts be grateful and our spirits at peace
in your unfailing presence with us.

This we ask in Christ's name and spirit, as we also pray together:

**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 forever. Amen.**

***SUNG RESPONSE** *Bless God, O My Soul*



The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The melody is written on a treble clef staff, and the accompaniment is on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Bless God, O my soul! All with - in me bless God's name!
Bless God, who was, and is, and shall ev - er be the same!

MESSAGE FOR ALL AGES

Rev. Brenda

SOLO

You are Mine

David Haas arr. David Haas & Kate Cuddy

Paul Stansel, soloist

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 11a

Pew Bible, p. 537

Philippians 1:3-11

Pew Bible, p. 953

SERMON

The Trees Outside the Window

INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITY

DEDICATION OF OFFERINGS

We are grateful for our gifts,

and for the ability to give them.

We are mindful of our place in the web of creation,

and of the ways our generousities are needed.

Because we are the people of God and the community of Christ,

we open our hearts to the world around us.

***Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise God, all creatures here below,

Praise God for all that love has done,

Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication**

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Joys & Concerns, Pastoral Prayer

BLESSING FOR A TIME OF CLOSURE AND RELEASE

Rev. Brenda's dates of service:

July, 2015 through June, 2018 Transitional/Designated Term Pastor

July, 2018 through April, 2023 Settled Pastor

Greetings from the Farmington Valley Association, United Church of Christ

The Rev. Gay Godfrey, Chairperson, Committee on Ministry

Litany

We give thanks now to God, in whose hands are all our times and seasons:

for days and years of our ministry shared,

for laughter and tears, for trust and care,

for hope and joy, for courage and strength,

for things remembered and things learned,

for edges explored and centers held fast,

for willingness to imagine, to risk and to grow,

for traveling together in this community of faith,

through times of joy and seasons of challenge.

**All: In all this, we give thanks to God,
in whom we have been called together
and in whose love we remain connected,
even as this pastorate ends.**

**We bless now each other's journeys from here,
forgiving ourselves and each other for mistakes.**

**We release each other from dependencies,
promising to let new ministries take shape in freedom.**

**Blessed by all we have shared
and carrying always these gifts in us,
we move forward in the greatest of hope,
for new serving, new learning, new joys --
for the new life the Spirit is surely giving us.**

**In all that changes, and all that abides,
thanks be to God. Amen.**

***HYMN**

Sister, Let Me Be Your Servant Chalice (blue), 490

*Sister, let me be your servant, brother, let me walk with you;
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.*

*We are pilgrims on a journey, fellow travelers on the road.
We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.*

*I will weep when you are weeping, when you laugh I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow, till we've seen this journey through.*

*When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together of great love and agony.*

*Brother, let me be your servant, sister, let me walk with you,
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.*

***WORDS FOR CLOSING**

In the leaving and in the letting go,
our hearts both bound and released,
let there be this that remains:
the enduring of love,
the persisting of hope,
the remembering of joy,
the offering of gratitude,
the receiving of grace,
the blessing of peace.

***BENEDICTION**

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE** *A Song of Parting*
Senior Choir

Graham/Angerman

*Please be seated for a presentation
and a reception will follow in the parish hall.*

WELCOME

We're glad you've joined us for worship today.

Please know that whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

If you are visiting today, please help us get to know you better by filling out one of the visitor cards in the pews and placing it in the offering plate.

Questions? Please feel free to ask the pastor, or call the church office during the week.

*The flowers this morning are given by the congregation of
The First Congregational Church of Canton Center
with love and in celebration of Rev. Brenda.*

Worship Leaders in May

May 7 Ali Hager

May 21 The Rev. Linda Huff

May 14 The Rev. Terry Schmitt
(Communion)

May 28 Sarah Graves
(student, Andover Newton Seminary)

THE STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL - This is a fun, busy event with many hands needed to make it successful. We need to fill the positions required in order to hold the festival on Father's Day, June 18. The festival would be **SHORTCAKE - TAKE OUT ONLY**. We have fewer slots to fill but hullers and bakers are required. The decision whether the festival can be HELD or NOT depends on how many positions are filled by Sunday, May 28 to allow time to advertise the event. Church attendance has increased but is still very light and we cannot commit to holding the festival if we don't have the people to work. Please respond by signing up at church or by calling Donna Hammond at 860-693-8676 or 860-882-8375 by May 28.

MISSIONS & OUTREACH COLLECTION - The **May Missions Box collection will be toiletries and 64 oz. bottles of juice for Hands of Grace**, an outreach of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Hartford. Their mission is to "help individuals and families experiencing a financial crisis meet their basic needs so that they can achieve and maintain self-sufficiency." Hands of Grace offers help with food, clothing, and household goods. Our own Linda McAllister volunteers with this wonderful organization and has informed us that they particularly need shampoo, conditioner, toothbrushes, deodorant as well as juices. Any 64 oz. bottled juice will do, but the favorite juice for families is apple juice. If you want to know more about Hands of Grace, you can check them out at handsofgracect.org.

BRIAN'S ANGELS - May 19 at 11:00 a.m. we will be making sandwiches for Brian's Angels Homeless Outreach in Bristol. Signups are on the kitchen door.

