



# THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH CANTON CENTER, CT

May 18, 2025 ~ 10:00 a.m.

Fifth Sunday of Easter



*I love when things are transparent, free and clear of all inhibition and judgement.*

*~Pharrell Williams, singer / songwriter*

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## ~ ORDER OF WORSHIP ~

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*\*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.*

### PRELUDE

*I Vow to Thee My Country*

Gustav Holst

*{During the prelude feel God's love and peace surround you}*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

From the rising of the sun to its setting, the Lord's love endures.  
A love that transcends our limitations, our prejudices, and our proneness to judge.

**For God's love embraces all, even those we find  
most challenging to understand.**

We are called to worship not with a spirit of judgment,  
but with hearts open to the boundless love of God.

**We are called to be people of love, not judgment.  
People who reflect the heart of  
Jesus, who welcomed the outcast, forgave the sinner,  
and challenged the self-righteous.**

We gather to embrace this call, to lay down our burdens of judgment,  
and to open ourselves to the transformative power of divine love.

**Let us worship the God who teaches us  
to love our neighbors as ourselves.**

### \*HYMN

*Holy, Holy, Holy. Lord God Almighty*

Pilgrim (Red) #251

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

**Merciful God, we confess that we often fall short of Your call to love. Help us  
to see others as You see them, with compassion and understanding, seeking to  
release the judgments we carry in our hearts. In Your presence, we find both**

challenge and comfort. Challenge to confront the judgments we harbor, and comfort with the assurance of Your unwavering love. Pour out Your Spirit upon us, that we may be transformed. Grant us the courage to love as You love, to forgive as You forgive, to walk in the way of Jesus, witnessing the image of God in every person we encounter. Amen.

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.

### **\*Gloria Patri**

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,  
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,  
world without end, Amen, Amen.*

*(The youth are excused for Church school)*

### **OFFERING**

As we offer back a portion of what God has given us, let us do so with a spirit of generosity that mirrors God's own. May these gifts be used to further God's work of reconciliation and healing in the world. May they be a testament to our willingness to embody Christ's love, breaking down the walls that separate us – walls of prejudice, indifference, and injustice – and to build a world where all are welcomed, valued, and loved. May our giving reflect the inclusive love of our Savior. We will now receive our Sunday morning offering.



### **OFFERTORY**



*America the Beautiful*  
Senior Choir

Samuel Ward arr. Buryl Red

### **\*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**

God of transformation, we dedicate ourselves to the ongoing work of conversion – turning from judgment to love, from division to unity, from self-righteousness to humility. Help us to cultivate a spirit of self-examination, to recognize our own capacity for judgment, and to embrace the liberating truth of Your unconditional love. May we be transformed into vessels of Your grace, reflecting Your light in a world that is often shrouded in darkness. We dedicate our hearts and hands to this sacred work. Amen

## **SCRIPTURE**



Acts 9:1-19  
Luke 6:27-38

Pew Bible pg. 893  
Pew Bible pg. 838

## **SERMON**

*Beyond Judgment to Grace*

## **PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH**

*Joys & Concerns*  
*Moment of Silence*  
*Pastoral Prayer*

## **\*HYMN**

*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

Chalice (Blue) #517

{Written in 1747 by Charles Wesley. Charles and his brother, John, were founders of the Methodist movement. Also considered a prayer, Wesley's words are asking Jesus to enter our hearts, transforming us to live without judgment making us a new creation in Him. }

## **\*BENEDICTION**

## **\*BENEDICTION RESPONSE**

*Song of Community*  
Senior Choir

Carolyn McDade

## **\*POSTLUDE**

*Allegro in B Flat*

Georg F. Handel

***THE WORSHIP IS ENDED***



***OUR SERVICE NOW BEGINS***