



COMMUNITY CELEBRATION SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 13, 2020
9:30 AM

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AKRON

OPEN & AFFIRMING WELCOME STATEMENT

First Congregational Church of Akron unconditionally affirms all people as we live out our call to follow Jesus Christ and his teaching of inclusive love.

We welcome people of every race, age, nationality, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, family circumstance, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, or spiritual background.

We invite all who are seeking God's presence in their lives to participate fully in our church life, ministry, and leadership.

We strive to be a safe place, free from the fear of judgment, where wounds can heal, differences are cherished, and inclusivity is intentional.

We commit ourselves to the struggle against injustice, discrimination, violence, and hatred, in order to foster a world of peace and wholeness.

God loves you. Christ invites you. We embrace and celebrate you.

PRELUDE

Paradiso

Andrea and Ennio Morricone

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We gather together again, reminding ourselves that we are the church.

All: Not limited by time or space, in unity we gather to worship God.

One: Together we baptize our babies, we celebrate marriages, and honor loved ones at death.

All: In every stage of life, in times of blessing and times of burden, we walk together, seeking harmony and wholeness.

One: Here we are reminded of God's comfort and love for the world.

All: We are renewed here to go out into the world to serve others.

One: We gather again, reminding ourselves that we are the church!

All: For the glory of God!

**God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of his Spirit into open minds and hearts.**

**Lord of all, of church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,
keep us faithful to the gospel, help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;
We who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!**

CENTERING AND OPENING PRAYER

THOUGHTS FOR THE YOUNG

WELCOMING THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF FIRST CHURCH

Congregation's Responsive Covenant

**We then, members of First Church, welcome you to this household of faith.
We offer to share with you the hopes and labors and joys of this church of Christ.
We promise to walk with you in Christian love.
We welcome you to be a part with us in the blessings and promises of God's Covenant,
to a place in the duties, privileges and glories of God's great church, and to the
fellowship of that multitude which no person can number.
God grant that we may be prepared through this earthly fellowship for the
perfect fellowship of our heavenly home.**

HANDBELL CHOIR

Knowing You

arr. Bill Ingram

READING FROM THE PSALMS

Psalm 114

When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel God's dominion.

The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back.

The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.

Why is it, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back?

O mountains, that you skip like rams? O hills, like lambs?

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of God, at the presence of the God of Jacob,
who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water.

INVITATION TO PRAYER

One: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

TIME OF PRAYER

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

Lord, listen to your children praying

Lord, send your spirit in this place;

Lord, listen to your children praying,

send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace! Repeat

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER (please use the language most familiar to you)

**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.

READING FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE

Exodus 14:19–31

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt." Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers."

Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

READING FROM THE EPISTLES

Romans 14:1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

SERMON

The Common Good

SONG

God the Spirit, Guide and Guardian

**God the Spirit, guide and guardian, wind-spiced flame and hovering dove,
breath of life and voice of prophets, sign of blessing,
power of love: give to those who lead your people, fresh anointing of your grace;
send them forth as bold apostles to your church in every place.**

**Christ the Savior, sovereign, shepherd, word made flesh,
love crucified, teacher, healer, suffering servant, friend of sinners,
foe of pride: in your tending may all pastors learn and live a shepherd's care;
grant them courage and compassion shown through word and deed and prayer.**

**Great Creator, life bestower, truth beyond all thought's recall,
fount of wisdom, womb of mercy, giving and forgiving all:
as you know our strength and weakness, so may those the church
exalts oversee its life steadfastly yet not overlook its faults.**

**Triune God, mysterious being, undivided and diverse,
deeper than our minds can fathom, greater than our creeds rehearse:**

**help us in our varied callings your full image to proclaim,
that our ministries uniting may give glory to your name.**

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERING

I'm Goin' To Sing

arr. Lee Kjelson

*Please visit www.akronfcc.org/donate to support
the vital and ongoing ministries and missions of First Church
or mail your donation to 292 East Market Street, Akron OH 44308.*

OFFERING PRAYER

SONG

Loving Only You, O Christ

*Refrain: Loving only you, O Christ, loving only you, O Christ.
Loving only you, O Christ, and never looking back.
I follow in your steps, my Lord, while never giving up, my Lord.
I fall before your altar, Lord while never looking back.*

*Loving only you, O Christ, listening to your message Christ.
Loving only you, O Christ, I seek to do your will.
I will protect the weak, my Lord.
I will defend the poor, my Lord.
I will proclaim your reign, my Lord.
While never turning back. Refrain*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

The Solid Rock

*If you have joined the service live on zoom or on the phone, please consider
remaining on the call for a time of fellowship after worship.*

LEADING WORSHIP TODAY

Rev. Nanette Pitt, Senior Minister

Antigoné Lowery, Associate Minister

Sara Schwendeman, Reader

Julie Lehman, Choir Director and Organist

Dave Aberth, Celebrate Service Music Leader

Christine Allison, Handbell Choir Director

Amanda-Joyce Abbott, Nicholas Campagna, Stephanie Corbin, Dave Lehman, Kellie Ramirez, Vocalists

Stephanie Corbin, Matt Dudack, Mike Vincent, Instrumentalists