



SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

JULY 12, 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.

WELCOME

CENTERING REFLECTION & PRAYER

TIME OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP

All Are Welcome

**Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.**

**Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love Christ will end divisions:**

All are welcome, all are welcome,

All are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.

Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:

All are welcome, all are welcome
All are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.

Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter,

All are welcome, all are welcome,
All are welcome in this place.

God's Grace

We're standing in your light, O God.
Your glory in the midst of us.
You call us to this sacred space,
to live within your grace.

Refrain: God's grace, God's grace,
the hope by which we are fed.
God's grace, God's grace,
with joy may our hearts be led.

You strengthen us through fear and doubt.
To heal our lives as we reach out.
To welcome to this sacred space,
all those who long for grace *Refrain*

Our gifts from you we share with all,

**to justice work so we are called.
You send us from this sacred space,
so all may know you grace. *Refrain***

He's Everything to Me

**In the stars his handiwork I see,
on the wind he speaks with majesty,
though he ruleth over land and sea,
what is that to me?**

**I will celebrate Nativity,
for it has a place in history,
sure, he came to set his people free,
what is that to me?**

**'Till by faith I met him face to face
and I felt the wonder of his grace,
then I knew that he was more than just
a God who didn't care, that lived away out there, and**

*Refrain: Now he walks beside me day by day.
Every watching o'er me lest I stray.
Helping me to find that narrow way
He's everything to me. *Repeat**

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***

MUSIC REFLECTION

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 65: 9-13

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, so you have prepared it.

You water it furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

MESSAGE: *Listening Ears, Receiving Hearts*

SENDING SONGS: *Draw the Circle Wide*

Refrain: Draw the circle wide.

Draw it wider still.

**Let this be our song, no one stands alone
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.**

**God the still-point of the circle,
'round whom all creation turns;
nothing lost, but held forever,
in God's gracious arms. *Refrain***

**Let our hearts touch far horizons,
so encompass great and small;
let our loving know no borders
faithful to God's call. *Refrain***

**Let the dreams we dream be larger,
than we've ever dreamed before;
let the dream of Christ be in us,
open every door. *Refrain***

May the Blessing of God

**May the blessing of God go before you,
May her grace and peace abound.
May her spirit live within you,
May her love wrap you 'round.
May her blessing remain with you always,
May you walk on holy ground.**

BLESSING

NEWS & NOTES

LEADING WORSHIP TODAY

Rev. Nanette Pitt, Senior Minister
Antigoné Lowery, Associate Minister

Music and vocals: Dave Aberth, Matt Dudack, Kellie Ramirez, & Mike Vincent

CCLI License #11234842 and CCS License #8399

Support First Church's Ministry. Visit www.akronfcc.org/donate to support the vital and ongoing ministries and missions of this congregation. You are also welcome to mail a donation to 292 East Market Street, Akron OH 44308. Thank you!

Coming Out Christian. TONIGHT, from 6-7pm, members of the LGBTQ+ community can come together online to explore Christianity and the possibility of understanding faith in new ways as we reclaim and explore our faith journeys. Join us as we rethink God's love toward LGBTQ+ Christians! If you would like to join the discussion, please RSVP to Kasey Kalchert at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org by 5pm TODAY. You will receive a Zoom link in your email to join the conversation.

July Teen Bible Study. Calling all teens! We invite you to join Pastor Antigoné on Zoom each Wednesday in July from 7pm-8:30pm for a 5-week study on the book of Lamentations. Each week, we will discuss a theme in Lamentations and what it can teach us about our ability to create social change in our society. Many young people are at the center of important social movements in our society, reminding us that anyone can create positive change. As Mahatma Gandhi reminds us, we are to *"be the change that [we] wish to see in the world."* For this reason, we hope that you will join us in this safe and exciting space to share and connect with other like-minded teens! To RSVP, please email Kasey Kalchert at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org no later than 5pm each Tuesday in July.

Church Chat! Fellowship Online. Are you missing Coffee Hour after church? Missing the chance to see and catch up with other members and friends? Join our pastors and others from church online for fellowship on Thursday, July 16, from 8:30-9:30am AND again from 6:30pm-7:30pm, RSVP to Kasey Kalchert at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org by 5pm on July 15 for either or both. You'll receive a

Zoom link in your email to join the conversation. We look forward to seeing you online with coffee in hand!

Online Bible Study for Men* You are warmly invited to join Rev. Steven Savides online for an exploration of the scriptures on Saturday, July 18, 8-9am. Participants are encouraged to have a bible with them (any translation) and to be prepared to journey through scripture with thought-provoking conversation. Steven is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Notre Dame and an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. Please RSVP to Kasey: kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org by 4pm on Friday, July 17. **The designation "men" is meant to create a space in which all who identify as male or who embrace a masculine identity can feel welcome and find fellowship.*

First Church Reads – White Fragility. In collaboration with members of First Christian Church, Cuyahoga Falls and Rev. Debbie Saxe, this July we will read and discuss Robin J. DiAngelo's work [White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism](#). Discussions facilitated by Pastor Nanette and Pastor Debbie, will be held on Wednesdays in July from 7-8:30pm as we read through the book. To RSVP, please email Kasey Kalchert at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org no later than 5pm each Wednesday in July. In *White Fragility*, antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo deftly illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and “allows us to understand racism as a practice not restricted to ‘bad people’ (Claudia Rankine).” Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. Books are available on [Amazon](#) and Kindle e-Readers, or can be sourced from your favorite bookseller.

PUBLIC Theology on Zoom. On Thursday, July 23 at 6:30pm, you're invited to join us for an online happy hour, more commonly known as PUBLIC Theology. Join us, via zoom, to talk about life, faith, the multiverse, and anything else that may be on your mind at the moment. Feel free to bring a drink or cocktail to the conversation! This will be a joint event between First Christian Cuyahoga Falls, and the First Congregational Church of Akron. Please RSVP for the event to Kasey Kalchert at kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org.

Breakfast with Families and Tots on Zoom. We invite families with toddler aged children to join Pastor Antigone on Saturday, July 25 from 8am-9am for a Breakfast Zoom gathering! This will be a time to catch up, discuss some of the joys and challenges of parenting at home during COVID-19, while enjoying your favorite breakfast. Please RSVP to Kasey: kasey.kalchert@akronfcc.org by 4pm on Friday, July 24.

Asian Services In Action, Inc. is the July Mission of the Month! [Asian Services in Action, Inc. \(ASIA\)](#) strives to empower and advocate for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI); and to provide AAPIs and other communities access to quality cultural and linguistically appropriate information, health and social services. ASIA has taken on the challenging tasks to help the underserved, low-income, and immigrant communities across the state. Funds raised from the Mission of the Month will be used to support the "Lucky Seniors" program, specifically for the congregate meals. The goal of the program is to improve the physical and mental health of Asians seniors living in Northeast Ohio. If you like to make a contribution, please make your check out the First Congregational Church of Akron with "ASIA Inc" in the memo line or donate online at www.akronfcc.org/donate

IN OUR DAILY PRAYERS

We offer daily prayers of thanksgiving for all who are struggling in body, mind, or spirit each day. We pray especially for all those around the world who are affected by the coronavirus; those who are sick and those who care for them, those who work tirelessly to provide treatment and vaccine. We give thanks for our public officials and leaders, those who staff hospitals and work in grocery stores, for first responders and emergency service providers. Within our community we pray for Chris, Marilyn, Margaret, Jessica, Lola, Barbara, Carole, George, Madeline, Betty, Wanda, Art, and Doug.

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