

**First Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ**  
August 29, 2021

Ministry of the Acolyte

Gathering #138

“Holy Ground”

Welcome, Announcements and Opening Prayer

Prelude

Responsive Reading *from Psalm 139*

One: My God, you have seen me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise.

**All: You know what I’m thinking before I speak.**

**Your hand hems me in before and behind.**

**Your limits protect me and comfort me.**

One: Where shall I run from your presence, O God?

And where shall I fly from your Spirit?

**All: If I climb up to heaven or go down to the dead,**

**if I take wings and fly to the ends of the earth,**

**wherever I go, your hand shows me the way**

**and welcomes me when I arrive.**

One: It was you, God, who formed my inward parts;

you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

**All: I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made!**

One: Wonderful are all your works, O God;

this I know very well.

**All: Search me then, God, and know my heart;**

**test me and know my most intimate thoughts.**

**See if there is any wicked way in me,**

**and lead me in the way everlasting.**

\*Hymn #23

“The God of Abraham Praise”

*vs. 1-3*

Confession: **Creator, you made us to enjoy our lives with you, and we hid from you because we were afraid. Jesus, you lit up our world with your love and we crawled into the dark to hide our sin. Spirit, you bring us the fire of holy passion and we shake our heads because we assume the joy is for somebody else. And as we have turned away from your gifts, dear God, we have added to the pain in the world, our own and everyone else’s. Forgive us our fear, Creator, Jesus, Spirit, and give us another chance to love. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon with Gloria Patri #813

Statement of Faith: *(from the United Church of Canada)*

**We are not alone; we live in God's world.**

**We believe in God: who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,**

**who works in us and others by the Spirit.**

**We trust in God. We are called to be the Church:**

**to celebrate God's presence, to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus,  
crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.**

**We are not alone. Thanks be to God.**

Moments of Concern and Celebration

Pastoral Prayer and Our Savior's Prayer (trespasses)

Special Music

Worship of God with our Tithes and Offerings

\*Doxology #815 and Offertory Prayer

Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:7-14

Sermon "blessings"

\*Hymn #291 "O Sing a Song of Bethlehem"

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Communion Prayer: **You have given yourself to us, loving God,  
in the simple food and drink we have shared. Jesus has been here. Even  
now, his presence is strengthening us to be his Body. God, give us  
courage; make us whole and give us peace. Fill us with Holy Spirit and  
send us out to touch the world with your healing Presence; through  
Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Friend. Amen.**

Liturgy of Farewell

*(following pages)*

## ORDER FOR A TIME OF PASSAGE

MARY: Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives.

PHIL: People move into our community and church life. Others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings.

MARY: Today we share the time of farewell with David, our pastor, who is retiring. On August 2, 2010, we called David Weddington serve as our pastor.

DAVID: I thank the First Congregational Church, its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown me these last eleven years. I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have made. I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.

**PEOPLE: We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and accept that you now leave to retire from pastoral ministry. We are grateful for your time among us. We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.**

DAVID: I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

*(All who are able may stand for these words.)*

PHIL: Do you, the members and friends of the First Congregational Church of Littleton release David from the duties of pastor?

**PEOPLE: We do, with the help of God.**

PHIL: Do you offer your encouragement for his ministry as it unfolds in new ways?

**PEOPLE: We do, with the help of God.**

MARY: Do you, David, release this local church from turning to you and depending on you?

DAVID: I do, with the help of God.

MARY: Do you offer your encouragement for the continued ministry here and for the relationship with another who will come to serve?

DAVID: I do, with the help of God.

PHIL: Our Associate Conference Minister, Richard Slater, planned to be here to represent the larger church, but with this new outbreak of Covid, the Conference Minister has asked Conference staff to avoid in-person gatherings until the situation improves.

MARY: Nonetheless, on behalf of the North Country Association and the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ, Reverend Slater affirms the words we have spoken: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. And the member churches of the North Country Association and the New Hampshire Conference will hold us in prayer and pledge their continued support in the transitions signified in this service.

CHURCH MEMBERS: **Thanks be to God**

PHIL: Let us pray.

UNISON: **God, whose everlasting love for all is trustworthy, help us to trust the future which rests in your tender care. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories and move in new directions, until that time to come when we are completely one with you and with each other, in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.**

HYMN: #139 "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

BENEDICTION

RESPONSE: #426 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

POSTLUDE