



First Central Congregational

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

September 19, 2021

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Prelude

Plainsong Fantasy

Gibbons

Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Katie Miller

***Greeting and Passing of the Peace**

"The Peace of God be with you."

In Unison: **Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.**

** Let us rise in body or spirit.*

Call to Worship

Sam Pfeifer, liturgist

Holy One, in your image you have created humankind in great diversity.

We give thanks for the differences.

Many are the gifts we offer to one another.

We are a rainbow of colors, a mosaic of cultures.

God surveyed the diversity that was created and said:

It was very good.

***Processional Hymn**

Let Justice Flow like Streams

Let Justice Flow like Streams

588

Jane Parker Huber, 1984

Amos 5:14-15, 24; 7:7-8

1 Let jus - tice flow like streams of spark - ling wa - ter, pure,
2 Let righ - teous - ness roll on as oth - ers' cares we heed,
3 So may God's plumb line, straight, de - fine our mea - sure true,

En - a - bling growth, re - fresh - ing life, a - bun - dant, cleans - ing, sure.
An ev - er - flow - ing stream of faith trans - lat - ed in - to deed.
And jus - tice, right, and peace per - vade this world our whole life through.

The musical score is written for a four-part choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in 4/4 time. The melody is in the soprano part, and the bass part provides a harmonic foundation. The lyrics are written below the staves.

This is one of two hymns Jane Parker Huber wrote for special events emphasizing economic justice for women at the time of

Tune: ST. THOMAS S.M.
Aaron Williams' New Universal Psalmist, 1770

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*Invocation

God of justice and love, we invite your healing Spirit in this place. We pray that you would make of us a new creation, reconciling us to one another in Christ. Give us a vision of wholeness and peace. Empower us to live faithfully as your disciples. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

*Gloria

Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, Three in One; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

Conversation with the Children

Welcoming New Members

Anthem

Lost in the Night

Epistle Lesson

Romans 7:14-25

For the Word of God in scripture,
For the Word of God within us,
For the Word of God among us,
Thanks be to God.

Sermon

An Invitation

Rev. Dr. Scott Jones

***Hymn**

We Yearn, O Christ, for Wholeness

We Yearn, O Christ, for Wholeness

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Dösa Carlson, 1986; rev. 1993



1 We yearn, O Christ, for whole - ness and for your heal - ing touch;
2 We long to have com - pan - ions who trav - el by our side,
3 We need your liv - ing pres - ence, O Christ of Gal - i - lee,



too long have we felt help - less; our bur - dens seemed too much.
strong friends to call and an - swer with whom we are al - lied;
a pres - ence that re - vives us and sets our spir - its free.



For - get - ting all pre - tens - es we make our plead - ings heard,
As we lift up each oth - er when strug - gles lay us low,
No long - er are we fear - ful, your love per - vades each place.



in hope and ex - pec - ta - tion a - wait your gra - cious Word.
com - mu - ni - ty de - vel - ops; our faith and car - ing grow.
Em - pow - er us with cour - age to claim your heal - ing grace.



***Prayer of Confession**

Rev. Dr. Jim Harmon

O God, who creates and loves all people, we come before you today confessing the sin of racism in our country, our church and in ourselves. Forgive us for our part in it, for the ways we have contributed to the oppression of others whether knowingly or unknowingly. We want to be different. Through your Holy Spirit, may we be given the grace and power to change within ourselves and also, to join with others to do the work of love and justice in the world. Amen.

*** Assurance**

Jesus Christ has defeated sin and death; they have no power over us. God has set us from what binds us. We may now live with justice and love, experiencing the joy of new life in Christ.

Prayers

Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer

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.

Offertory

A Fancy

Gibbons

***Hymn of Dedication**

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***Offertory Prayer**

O God, you have made every child a holy child. You have given us life and offered us new life in Jesus Christ. We give you thanks. We open our hearts now and give generously to you and to your church so that your dream of a better world might come true. Amen.

***Recessional Hymn**

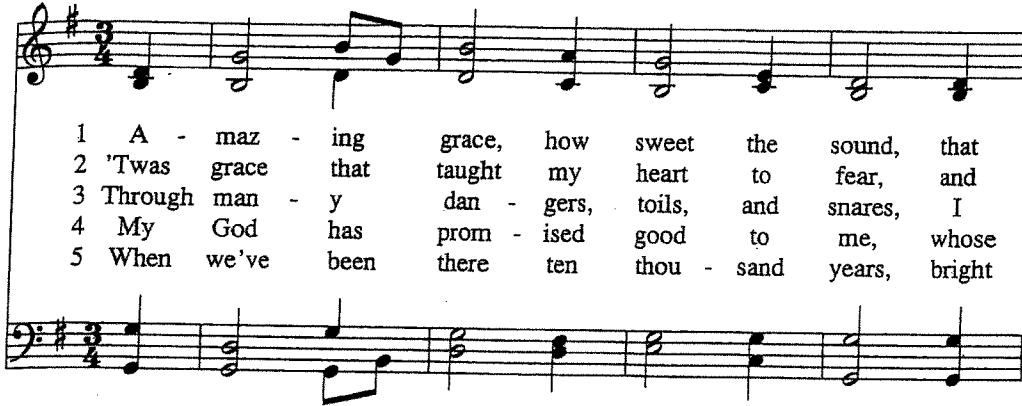
Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

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St. 1-4, John Newton, 1779; alt.

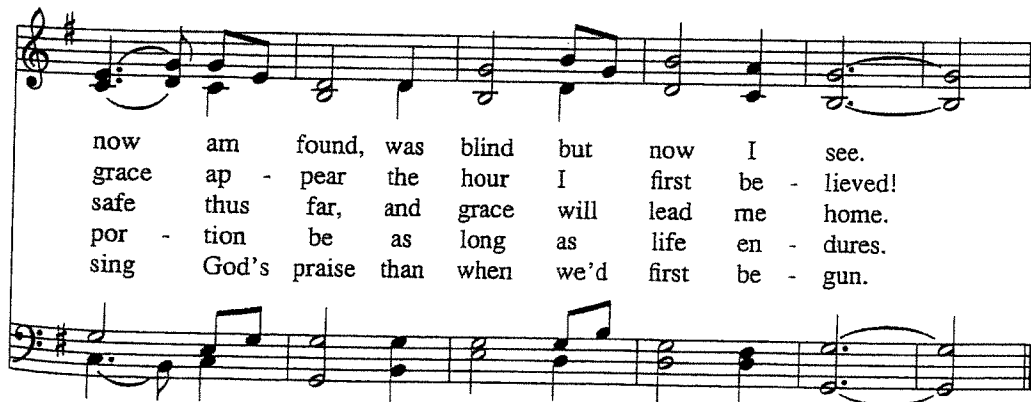
St. 5, A Collection of Sacred Ballads, 1790



1 A - maz - ing grace, how sweet the sound, that
 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and
 3 Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares, I
 4 My God has prom - ised good to me, whose
 5 When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright



saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved; How pre - cious did that
 have al - read - y come; 'Tis grace has brought me
 word my hope se - cures; God will my shield and
 shin - ing as the sun, We've no less days to



now am found, was blind but now I see.
 grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved!
 safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
 por - tion be as long as life en - dures.
 sing God's praise than when we'd first be - gun.

John Newton's autobiographical hymn reflects his conversion from his earlier existence as a slave trader. While serving as curate in the English village of Olney, Newton met William Cowper, and together they published Olney Hymns, which included this hymn.

Tune: AMAZING GRACE C.M.
 (NEW BRITAIN)
 Columbia Harmony, Cincinnati, 1829
 Arr. Edwin O. Excell, 1900

X

***Benediction**

Benediction Response

Bouma

May you hear laughter in the wind. May you see hope in the light.
May you find courage in your faith. May you know joy in your God.

Postlude

Postludium

Gibbons

Open & Affirming Statement

In our ongoing quest for hearts that open, minds that understand,
and lives that serve, we welcome into our fellowship, membership, leadership, and employment,
all people, regardless of abilities, race, gender, sexual orientation, or any God-given characteristic.

Announcements
September 19, 2021

Prayers: for *Janet Acker*, recovering from knee replacement surgery; *Richard Bouma, Jr.*, recovering from a heart attack; *Barb Dietrich* and family, on the death of niece *Beth Jakubowsk*; *Colleen Syster*, hospitalized at Clarkson.

Happy Birthday this week: to *Richard Le Clerc*, *Vic Kensler*, *Cherie Ferber*, *Katrina Mitchell*, and *Steve Trautman*.

Chancel flowers and decorations: sponsored this month by *Terry & Pam Beranek*.

New Members: Welcome to *Kathy Ramirez* and *Caroline Jensen*, joining our church family this morning.

Fair Trade Coffee: sponsors this month *Steve Jackson & Rick Richards*; *Bev Fleckten*; *Neha Kumari*. Coffee hour treats this morning are in honor of *Shahi Shamim*'s birthday from her friend *Neha Kumari*. Shahi and Neha are doctoral students at the Nebraska Med Center and have been attending First Central in recent months. Happy Birthday Shahi!

Want to donate electronically? Please scan the QR code.



Activities for the Coming Week, September 19 – September 25

*Lectionary Readings: Esther 7:1-6, 9-10, 9:20-22; Psalm 124;
Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29; Psalm 19:7-14; James 5:13-20; Mark 9:38-50.*

Monday: Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m., Pastor's Study.

Wednesday: Evergreen Thrift Shop 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Family Night, brown bag dinner at 5:30, activities at 6 p.m.
Sanctuary Choir, 7 p.m.
Vespers, 8 p.m.

Thursday: Evergreen Thrift Shop 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Friday: Evergreen Thrift Shop 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Saturday: All-Church Retreat, 9:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m., Platte River State Park.
Evergreen Thrift Shop 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Sunday, September 26

Worship: 10:30 a.m. on FaceBook Live, YouTube, or in person. Masks required.

First Forum: 9:15 a.m., third floor parlor, exploring anti-racism work as a part of our Brave Space initiative. **Aban Laa**, Executive Director of the New Life Family Alliance, will speak about refugee work in Omaha and the growth of our South Sudanese population.

FirstKids: will not be held today.

*The church calendar is also available at www.firstcentral.org
Like us on **Facebook**. Follow us on **Twitter**. Watch us on **YouTube**.*

OUR FAITHFUL COMMITMENT TO BEING AN ANTI-RACIST CHURCH

Because we affirm that the beauty and blessedness of God's creation is present in all people

We make a conscious and deliberate decision to celebrate diversity of creation as uniquely experienced by people of color. We honor the sacredness of people's lives saying, "Black lives matter. Indigenous people's lives matter. People of color's lives matter. LGBTQ+ people of color matter."

Because we know racism will not be eradicated without deliberate engagement in analysis and action

We shake off complacency and strive constantly to identify the social institutions and practices that grant power and privilege to white people over and against people of color. We do not deflect, deny, or evade opportunities to examine racism and privilege and its effects—and then we work to dismantle it.

Because we confess that harm has been done to people of color in the name of God by words and deeds, and by silence and complacency:

We renounce theologies, ideologies, and doctrines that have been used to justify the enslavement and degradation of people of color. We examine and reimagine church systems and structures, decolonize our iconography and images, and transform the language of liturgies and hymns.

Because we embrace the extravagant love taught by Jesus:

We celebrate black, indigenous, and youth of color and follow their leadership toward creating a world that thinks critically about race and racism, then acts for justice. We preach prophetically, witness publicly, and act boldly to confront injustice in all forms.

Because we recognize the need for greater understanding of how racism and white supremacy have impacted people in faith communities:

We support one another on journeys to learn how racism and its effects are embedded in the Church, in all social institutions, as well as in ourselves. We follow the lead of and come alongside people of color to actively resist and overcome systemic injustices of all kinds.

Because we look forward to the time when every church in our Conference, in the UCC, in our country, and in our world senses the movement of the Spirit, recognizes the impact of racism on people's lives and our communities, and commits to dismantling racism:

We strive for racial justice within all settings of the Conference's ministry, and we support our ministers and people who protest and speak out, and who advocate for equity in access to housing, health care, education, banking, and all other social institutions that disadvantage people of color.

We create Brave Spaces in our Conference and dedicate time for the education, conversation, and discernment central to the journey of being anti-racist and dismantling racism, and we invite all congregations to create Brave Space specific to anti-racism in their own communities.

We hope for each and every congregation to one day prophetically and publicly commit to being an Anti-Racist Church and to living out that commitment anew each day. We commit to BE Church together, live into God's extravagant welcome, and advocate for justice so that all people may know love, safety, belonging, and dignity.

