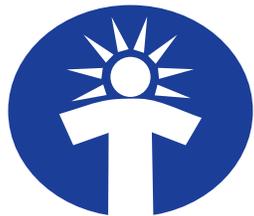


Welcome!

First Congregational Church of Webster Groves
United Church of Christ



Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

March 29, 2020
FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT



THE LAST SUPPER

We respond to God's call by welcoming everyone regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, race, gender identity, sexual orientation or socio-economic background.

To proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, we affirm that all may share in the full life, ministry, fellowship, responsibilities and blessing of our congregation.

*No matter who you are
or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.*

Order of Worship

OPENING SONG

Kindred, We Now Meet to Worship
(Dr. Leon Burke III, *Director of Music*)

Thommy Snell

Kindred, we now meet to worship,
Reaching out through screen and phone.
Though we dwell in isolation
We don't have to be alone.
Worshiping beyond our building,
Our connection's no less real.
Though we cannot meet in person,
Covenant unites us still.

Friends, be gentle with each other,
There's so much we're going through.
May this be a time for healing,
Holding space for grieving too.
Bodies, minds, and hearts are weary,
Anguish fills the aching soul,
But we know with perseverance
Broken hearts can be made whole.

WELCOME

Rev. David Denoon, *Pastor*

PRELUDE

I Need Thee Every Hour

arr. Dale Wood

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

CALL TO WORSHIP

Merrimon Boyd, *Student Minister*

Psalm 51:10-12

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit away from me.
Restore to me the joy of my salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

RAISING THE COVENANT

Tracey Harris, DCE & Student Minister

**We who are called of God into this Christian community covenant together;
to seek to know the will of God, to experience the joy and struggle of
discipleship, to proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, and to work
for peace and justice among all people. We trust God's promise of grace and
forgiveness and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our trials and rejoicing.**

Invitation

St. Benedict was a religious reformer who lived in Italy in the late 400s and early 500s. He is known as the “father of Western monasticism,” having established a Rule that would become the norm for innumerable Christian monks and nuns. He is the patron saint of Europe. I invite you to share with me in a Benedictine fashion:

Prayer

May we approach you God in confession that there are times when humility seems far from us, when waiting-our-turn is too long, or when we think that we are too good for misfortune to enter our space. Something is wrong when love for self is misguided, as when we love ourselves more than neighbor. The rule of St. Benedict reminds us that humility is unhesitating obedience, which is natural for those who cherish Christ. In our confession of sin, we are professing participation with the actions of a selfless life exemplified in Christ. We must live a life that will drop what’s in hand and leave it unfinished, with a ready step to respond to the orders of the day for the good of humanity, knowing lives of our neighbors and our own lives are precious images of the Divine One. We step into your presence with the ready step to obey your voice as you call us to service. With the example of Christ, we participate in your richly shaped worship as an expression of an in-Christ partnership. Amen.

THE WORD SHARED

Rev. Denoon

From the Gospels

John 13:1-16

New Revised Standard Version

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and to go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end.

The devil had already put into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

Jesus answered, “You do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.”

Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.”

Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!”

Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to be washed, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” (For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason, “Not all of you are clean.”)

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

“Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.”

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE OF THE DAY

Merrimon Boyd

Service vs. Disservice

Peter Collins was a convicted murderer who died of cancer after 32 years in a Canadian prison. In that time, he became a champion of prison rights, and made a short film called *Fly in the Ointment*. It's about a prolonged period that he spent in solitary confinement:

Somehow, I felt [my wife's] fingers on my leg. Shocked and excited, I opened my eyes only to realize it was a fly walking on me. I was greedy for human touch, so I closed my eyes and pretended it was her fingers. I tried to stay perfectly still because I didn't want to frighten the fly off and be left alone.

Perhaps many of you today feel like Peter Collins. You are in solitary confinement because of a sentence or maybe separation. Whatever the reason, unless its medical, nobody is exempt from being “greedy for a human touch.” Even if God must show up as a fly! We all need a touch. Because a touch means so much!

Jesus knew this. He wanted his disciples to know it as well. But more than that, he wanted them to know that doing good for the sake of being seen is deceptive. Your position, problems, situations should not dictate how or why you serve. Everyone who serves must serve despite the deception. In this text Jesus reveals to us how to serve despite prestigious positions, personal problems, and pitiful people.

Jesus serves despite a prestigious position.

He had been given all things by his father. He was their Rabbi and teacher. However, he serves. He reveals God in the everyday menial tasks of life. Like a productive pastor he looks around and sees a need. He sees dirty feet and collects things for service without complaining. Jesus get to peter with a towel in hand and Peter said, “You will never wash my feet!” Jesus said, “If I do not wash your feet then you have no share with me.”

What could be in the mind of a person who does not want a touch from Jesus? The younger generation live by a code of conduct that gives them street credibility, street cred. In other words, to be called a PIMP, to a young person is not demeaning. It is not degrading. As a matter of opinion, to the young person. It's all good! But, if you are advanced in age and have left the ways of the youth, then you might see that idiom as something far less than respectable. Maybe Peter thought he was a PIMP! Suggesting that a Person In My Position don't wash feet and Jesus was not giving adequate teaching. That's that the deception in service. Sometimes, you can think you are more than you are. But Jesus teaches with a towel that authentic and attractive leadership will touch one's life in the middle of a pandemic. Even when health officials say, “Distance Yourself,” there still is a touch from Jesus.

Jesus serves despite personal problems.

The text tells that Jesus, knew that his hour had come, and was soon to depart out of this world, having loved his own until the end. Even amid impending crucifixion John recalls the last supper as God participating with humanity. Jesus did not spend his time exposing, explaining, or excommunicating; He served and loved until the end.

The life experiences that we see in this text we all share. We know about personal problems. I

believe what Jesus want's in this 21st century are disciplined learners who reveal God in creative ways while serving others. How does he expect us to respond to our neighbor and ourselves?

In some spectacular ways and moments these things unite us. These things mature us. These things bless us. These things hurt us. These things repair us. Nevertheless, thanks be to God. How does Jesus respond in a world that does not care?

Jesus serves despite pitiful people.

Judas betrays Jesus after getting his feet washed. Amy Jill Levine confirms that all four gospels tell us that Judas betrayed Jesus. Despite the betrayal Judas was not a pitiful person but a person in a pitiful situation. Indeed, he is a person who as A.J. states, Judas “calls us to conscience.” Judas is also, made in the image and likeness of God.

John confirm Luke's point that the devil had already put in the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray Jesus (John 13:2), but we also learn that it was Judas, and not some unnamed disciple or person, who protested the anointing of Jesus, not because he was concerned for the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it” (John 12:6).

John reminds us that Jesus sometimes chooses an unlikely character to walk with him. “Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil” (John 6:70). He was speaking about Judas.

We need to remember Judas. Judas, who is a disciple, but some have written off as a devil, shares in the Last meal with Jesus. Judas gets to taste the bread and the wine, the body and the blood of our Lord and savior too.

My question to you before you write someone off. Is the body and the blood good enough for Judas? Can a betrayer become a better friend? Can a dead situation be brought back to life?

John's gospel narrative expresses a God who grants us power to reconcile with one another and give life to relationships that have died.

When I review the list of the participants in this last supper. I am totally impressed with how the Holy Spirit of God helps the readers to see common life struggles within the text. It's important to me as a believer to see these common yet strange events mature in the text. I see these same strange experiences maturing in my space and time as I am participating with the Holy One who cares, answers, gives, and blesses us with good things.

What a contribution! That's the one that counts like the widows two mites, Mary's Alabaster box, the meal of Peter's mother-n-law, and let us not forget Martha who worked in preparation for a meal fit for a king.

The example Christ left for me is “Count on Me”:

The Lord has need of workers to till his fields today,
So kindly he has led me to walk in wisdom's way,
I pray for grace to help me with all my heart to say,
“O blessed Savior, count on me.”

PRAYER HYMN

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love

Tom Colvin

Refrain.

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,

Show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.

Knelt at the feet of his friends,

Silently washing their feet,

Jesu, you acted as servant to them. *Refrain.*

Neighbors are rich and poor,
Varied in color and race,
Neighbors are near and far away. *Refrain.*

Kneel at the feet of our friends,
Silently washing their feet,
This is the way we should live with you. *Refrain.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We Lift Our Joys and Concerns to God

Prayers of the Day

The Prayer of Our Savior

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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Merrimon Boyd

My blessing for you is that you are mindful and ready to accept God's call to obedient fellowship. May hope, help and healing exude from your presence as you contact friend and the not so friendly through your electronic devices to encourage them to life in these times of uncertainty, challenge, and crisis as God gives us victory in Jesus name.

CLOSING WORDS

Rev. Denoon

Our worship has ended. Let our service begin.

POSTLUDE

Dorian Chorale

Jehan Alain, 1938

What's Been Happening at First Congregational Church

March 22 through March 29, 2020

As you know by now, all activities at First Church are suspended until mid-May. In the interest of community health, all activities scheduled to be held onsite, from now through the middle of May, have been cancelled. We hope to be able to return to worship, the weekend of May 16 - 17.

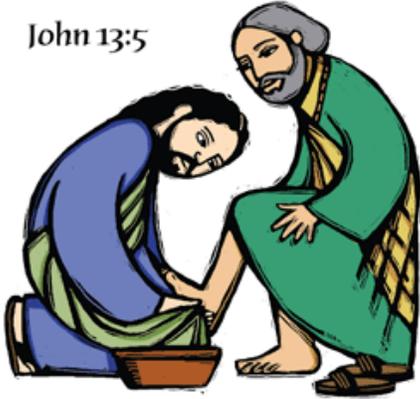
Until then, please join us for Worship every Sunday at 10:00am, on our YouTube Channel at <https://tinyurl.com/zv33t7x>. There are plenty of non-worship videos there too, including:

Time with Miss Tracey, The first volume of *The Tales of Beatrice Bunny* (by Cliff Aerie), and *Youth Sunday School* with Erick Falconer.

The March 29 Worship Service Fifth Sunday in Lent

He poured water
into a basin and began
to wash his
disciples' feet ...

John 13:5



You can watch today's service on our YouTube channel at:
<https://tinyurl.com/zv33t7x>

Student Minister Merrimon Boyd leads worship, on Sunday, March 29. Scripture: John 13:1-12. As the Last Supper gets underway, Jesus gets up from the table, prepares a basin, wraps a towel around himself, and proceeds to wash the disciples' feet. Peter objects that this is out of order, but Jesus insists that this moment is what all of his teaching has been about. Message of the Day: "Service vs. Disservice"

You can watch all our services on our YouTube Channel at:

<https://tinyurl.com/zv33t7x>

Or you can just listen to the services on our Sound Cloud page:

<https://soundcloud.com/firstchurchwg/tracks>

How to Give to First Church While We're Apart

If you are accustomed to putting an offering in the plate on Sunday mornings, you're kind of stuck right now. Believe it or not, even at this time, the church's expenses continue, and keeping current with your pledge is possible. Either send a check made out to "FCCWG" to:

**First Congregational Church UCC
10 W. Lockwood Ave.
Webster Groves, MO 63119**



or visit the "DONATE" page of our website at: www.FirstChurchWG.org/donate, to make an electronic contribution.

If you have been laid off or your business cannot operate during the "shelter in place" order (or if you just need to decrease your pledge), you can adjust the amount you have committed. Please email Jenny Jones at jennifer.jones@rubinbrown.com. She will make a confidential record of your adjustment, no questions asked.

A Renewed Appeal For Material Aid and Volunteers from

WEBSTER  ROCK HILL
M I N I S T R I E S

As we learned in an email on Tuesday, March 24, Webster Rock Hill Ministries is making an appeal to the community for additional support for their stakeholders in this challenging time. There is an immediate need for material donations and gift cards.

You can donate online at: <http://wrhm.org/help-us/>

Or you may send your check to:

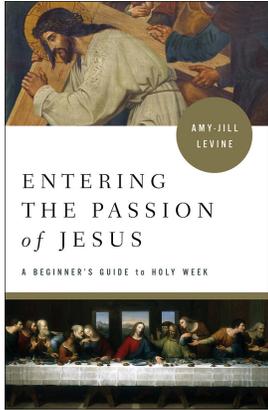
**Webster Rock Hill Ministries
111 East Waymire Avenue
Webster Groves, MO 63119**

Sundays in Lent

A mind-blowingly insightful, Jewish interpretation of Christ's Passion!

“Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner’s Guide to Holy Week”

by Amy-Jill Levine



For the Sundays in March and Palm Sunday, Pastor Dave Denoon will lead a Bible study series based on a book by the (Jewish) professor of Christian history at Vanderbilt University, Amy-Jill Levine. The series includes video commentaries featuring Prof. Levine and vibrant discussion featuring you!

Join Pastor Dave Denoon and the student ministers Tracey Harris and Merrimon Boyd for Sunday’s Bible study, on our YouTube channel at 11:00 AM.

Invitation: *Would you like to take part with them in the conversation? Send an email to Pastor Dave at ddenoon@firstchurchwg.org, and he’ll let you know how!*

Easter Flowers Available

Normally, during Easter we enjoy having our sanctuary beautifully decorated with a variety of beautiful spring flowers. As we will only be here in spirit this Easter, our order has been dramatically reduced (in part to save money and in part to keep the vendor from going out of business). Debbie Tolstoi has placed an order for 12 flowering hydrangeas and 12 flowering azaleas.



We are hoping to bring some cheer to those of us who are stuck inside.

To order a plant, <https://tinyurl.com/yx2uehuw>. (Once we have reached 24 flower sponsorships, the link will no longer be active.)

Debbie's Springtime 'Spressions'



Working at home is not a new experience for me as I have been a freelancer for many years, but I do enjoy working at First Church. It can feel a bit strange to be working from home. I particularly miss the companionship of my fellow workers. I have been coming up to church to pick up mail, do some printing, water my plants, etc. It is very quiet and feels a bit strange. I for one will be glad when this is over and done!



On my way in today, I stopped to take a few photos of the magnolia trees in the neighborhood, at the church and a couple of photos of my pansies and veggies that will hopefully get planted today. Hopefully these photographs will bring a you a bit of cheer.

Take care and be safe!

Debbie





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