



CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
30 N. CLINTON ST.
IOWA CITY, IA 52245
319-337-4301

WORSHIP FOR MAY 30, 2021
FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

“I used to say, ‘I’m a slow writer. I gestate for a long time. I have enough notes in my notebook to last the rest of my life.’ And I did, except my life changed, and I had to start writing over. The notebook was no longer understandable to me.”

Andre Dubus

PRELUDE “Prelude in E-Flat Major,” Op. 41 No. 1 Alexandre Guilmant

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP (from Psalm 66)
Make a joyful noise to God all the earth;
sing the glory of God's name.

Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!"

All the earth worships you;

they sing praises to you,

sing praises to your name.

Come and see what God has done.

Let us worship God.

HYMN "God of Our Life, Through All the Circling Years"

**God of our life, through all the circling years,
We trust in Thee;
In all the past, through all our hopes and fears,
Thy hand we see.
With each new day, when morning lifts the veil,
We own Thy mercies, Lord, which never fail.**

**God of the past, our times are in Thy hand;
With us abide.
Lead us by faith, to hope's true promised land;
Be Thou our guide.
With Thee to bless, the darkness shines as light,
and faith's fair vision changes into sight.**

**God of the coming years, through paths unknown
We follow Thee;
When we are strong, Lord, leave us not alone;
Our refuge be.
Be Thou for us in life our daily bread,
Our heart's true home when all our years have sped.**

OPENING PRAYER (Church of Scotland, The Rev. Sandy Forsyth, adapted)

**We thank you, God, that you have been with us in the past.
You have led us through the wilderness that life can be.
When we were lost, you searched for us.
When we were in deepest struggle, you comforted us.
For your love and commitment to all people, we praise you, God.**

**Come to us now in our lives as we look ahead once more.
In worship, speak to us.
In our journey through life, go with us.
When our lives are troubled, be with us.
When we are uncertain, steady us.
For your love which holds us forever, we give you thanks. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON Isaiah 40:27-31

PSALM 66:8-20

Bless our God, you peoples;
make the voice of praise to be heard.

**God holds our souls in life,
and will not allow our feet to slip.**

For you, O God, have proved us;
you have tried us just as silver is tried.

**You brought us into the snare;
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.**

You let enemies ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water;
but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

**I will enter your house with burnt-offerings
and will pay you my vows, which I promised with my lips
and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.**

I will offer you sacrifices of fat beasts
with the smoke of rams;

I will give you oxen and goats.

**Come and listen, all you who fear God,
and I will tell you what God has done for me.**

I cried out with my mouth,
and God's praise was on my tongue.

**If I had found evil in my heart,
the Lord would not have heard me;**

but in truth God has heard me
and attended to the voice of my prayer.

**Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer,
nor withheld steadfast love from me.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON Acts 17:22-28

SERMON “Searching for God Today”

TIME OF GRATITUDE

ANTHEM “Cornerstone” Shawn Kirchner
Virtual Choir

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

HYMN “O Day of God, Draw Nigh”

**O day of God, draw nigh
in beauty and in power;**

**come with your timeless judgment now
to match our present hour.**

**Bring to our troubled minds,
uncertain and afraid,
the quiet of a steadfast faith,
calm of a call obeyed.**

**Bring justice to our land,
that all may dwell secure,
and finely build for days to come
foundations that endure.**

**Bring to our world of strife
your sovereign word of peace,
that war may haunt the earth no more,
and desolation cease.**

**O day of God, draw nigh
as at creation's birth;
let there be light again,
and set your judgments on the earth.**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE “Sortie” (G Major) Jacques Lemmens

Opening Prayer adapted from The Rev. Sandy Forsyth, The Church of Scotland, Weekly Worship. Used with permission.

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Minister:	The Rev. Bill Lovin
Director of Children’s Programs:	The Rev. Ann Molsberry
Organist:	Bill Crouch
Choir Director	Kristin Ramseyer

RECORDINGS OF THE WORSHIP SERVICES are posted by early Sunday morning each week at <https://vimeo.com/channels/1547852>. The recordings remain up permanently, so you can watch past worship services at your convenience or recommend them to a friend.

WE WILL RECOGNIZE THE GRADUATING SENIORS DURING OUR ONLINE WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, JUNE 6. Each year we recognize the high school graduates at Congregational UCC. Usually members and friends are asked to share their thoughts and good

wishes with the graduates in a book that is presented to them along with a Prairie Lights gift certificate. And there is cake.

This year, of course, is different. We still want to celebrate with these seniors, however. **We invite you to send your thoughts to Tom Mittman, the chair of the Diaconate, who will then compile these and present them to the graduates.** Information about each of the seniors along with Tom's email address will be sent out to all members and friends in the coming week.

You will have to provide your own cake.

A SECOND REOPENING SURVEY: Our Reopening Committee has been meeting to consider all the concerns and logistics that are involved in opening the church and resuming in-person worship. The results of the first survey were so helpful that they have prepared a second brief survey in order to get your thoughts and to involve everyone in this effort. The survey is anonymous. Please take a few minutes to fill it out and return it—all online. And note that this is not a group survey. We ask that each church member in your family fill one out. You can find the survey [here](#).

RELAX

HAVE FUN

ENJOY LIFE

LIVE IN CHRIST

**The love of God has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.**

Good morning and welcome to the Congregational United Church of Christ in Iowa City. Whoever you are and wherever you are, it's good that you have found us and joined us.

Thanks to John and Mark, Bill, Kristin, Marie

Each Sunday we have a virtual coffee hour on Facebook as well as a Zoom coffee hour—two chances to connect with one another once more as a new week begins. The Zoom invitation went out on Saturday.

If you have questions about either of these—please send me an email on Sunday morning.

Some news about church staff. We have hired a new office manager as another step toward reopening our building. Her name is Jenn Harden, and she has extensive experience as an administrative assistant and also has experience in working in a church. She will start during the week of June 14. At first her hours will be limited, but as activity increases, so will her hours. Thanks to Christina Patramanis for filling in since Leo left last year.

Most of you have heard that our choir director, Kristin Ramseyer, has resigned and will end her work here on July 31. Along with everyone else, I am very grateful

for all the beautiful music Kristin has brought to our worship services and especially for her creativity and commitment in continuing our music program through the pandemic. While it is sad to see her leave, I have the good news that we have hired Dr. Chris Nakielski as our new choir director. Chris, of course, directed the choir when he was a Doctor of Music student here at the University. He is now teaching at Cornell College and will begin as our new director in August.

WE WILL RECOGNIZE THE GRADUATING SENIORS DURING OUR ONLINE WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, JUNE 13. Each year we recognize the high school graduates at Congregational UCC. Usually members and friends are asked to share their thoughts and good wishes with the graduates in a book that is presented to them along with a Prairie Lights gift certificate. And there is cake.

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in your family fill one out. A link to the survey was sent out this past week and can also be found in the bulletin.

As we move toward reopening, we're looking for ways to see one another in small groups and in various places. A picnic in City Park is being planned for the afternoon of Sunday, June 27. There will be more information about this in the coming weeks. And if you are interested in hosting a small group of people or being a part of such an event, send me an email. It could be an informal gathering for coffee and conversation at a park or your home, it could be a group meeting to do something together or study together—whatever you'd like. Let me know.

Let us center our hearts, our minds, and our spirits. Let us worship God.

CALL TO WORSHIP

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sing the glory of God's name.

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Let us sing “God of Our Life, Through All the Circling Years”

OPENING PRAYER

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In worship, speak to us.

In our journey through life, go with us.

When our lives are troubled, be with us.

When we are uncertain, steady us.

For your love which holds us forever, we give you thanks. Amen.

Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh upon us as your Word is read and proclaimed.
Speak to us your word of life
to restore, support, and strengthen us
as we follow in the way of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The first lesson comes from Isaiah, chapter 40.

This chapter begins Second Isaiah, also known as the “Book of Consolations,” written some 150 years after the death of Isaiah, as the exile of the Jewish people in Babylon was coming to an end. This is word of hope for weary people.

Listen for the Word of God, speaking to you.

PSALM 66:8-20

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make the voice of praise to be heard.

**God holds our souls in life,
and will not allow our feet to slip.**

For you, O God, have proved us;
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and will pay you my vows, which I promised with my lips
and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.**

I will offer you sacrifices of fat beasts
with the smoke of rams;
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**Come and listen, all you who fear God,
and I will tell you what God has done for me.**

I cried out with my mouth,
and God's praise was on my tongue.

**If I had found evil in my heart,
the Lord would not have heard me;**

but in truth God has heard me
and attended to the voice of my prayer.

**Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer,
nor withheld steadfast love from me.**

The second lesson comes from Act, chapter 17.

Paul has arrived in Athens on his own. While he waits for the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he walks around the city, doing a little sight-seeing. He doesn't especially like what he sees.

Paul begins to talk about Jesus and the resurrection and is mistaken as proclaiming two foreign gods. He then goes to the Areopagus, that is Mars Hill, west of the Acropolis.

SERMON

A TIME OF GRATITUDE

Last Thursday morning I was in my car, driving along, listening to the radio. And this song came on that I had never heard before. It was naming people in various circumstances and various occupations

Here's to the teachers in the crowded rooms
Here's to the workers in the fields

the band sang. And I thought: "Sure, sing for the teachers, sing for those in the fields, sing for all the workers. That's great!" Then, to my surprise they followed that with

Here's to the preachers of the sacred words
Here's to the drivers at the wheel

and concluded: Let the day begin.

Astonished, I thought: "Hey—that's me!" Not the driver at the wheel, but, you know, "the preacher of the sacred words." I've not been included in many songs.

As I said, I'd never heard that song before. And some of you are thinking: "How can he not know that song? It's over 30 years old. It was a hit!"

I don't know. I missed that one.

So, let me ask: Who are you unaware of that is singing about you? Somewhere, someone is rejoicing because of what you do, because of who you are. You—you are a reason for gratitude, for thanksgiving.

As we move toward reopening our building and resuming in person worship, I keep hear from members and friends of our congregation about how much they miss one another. As I said in the announcements, in these interim days we are looking for and planning ways to begin to see each other once more.

Heres to all of us. Let the day begin.

As the choir sings, let us rejoice and be grateful.

As we move forward to a new phase of our life together during this pandemic, your offerings to support the ongoing work of our congregation can be sent to the church at 30 N. Clinton Street in Iowa City, 52245. You can also give through the Donate button at the very top of our homepage at uccic.org.

Live in the abundance that surrounds us. And be grateful.

One of the great joys and privileges that we have as a congregation is to share our concerns and celebrations with one another, to bear one another's burdens, and in all this to show love for one another. You are invited to use the book at the entrance to the sanctuary to add to requests for prayer.

We give you thanks, O God, for you are the Refuge of our life, the Shield of our help. From generation to generation we thank you and count your praises—evening, morning, and noon—for our lives which are committed into your hands, for our souls which are entrusted to you, for your grace which is with us every day, for your wonders and goodness at all times. Your compassion does not fail. Your lovingkindness never ceases. Our hope is in you forever. As we rest in your grace in these moments, hear our prayers for the world, the church, and all who are in need.

In Jesus Christ, you go down to the lowest depths of our human condition, and you burden yourself with what burdens us. And even when we can hear no refrain of your presence, you are there. Through your Holy Spirit, you remain with us. From that faith we pray for the people of San Jose after the shootings there: those who mourn the dead, the police, the first responders, that you would comfort them with your peace beyond understanding, touch them with your healing power, and give them your strength in these days to rise once more. We pray, too, for the many others who are victims of gun violence in our nation—the wounded and the grieving. Surround all who have been shaken by tragedy with a sense of your presence and grace. Have mercy upon us, O God. Have mercy upon us all.

We pray for all who live threatened by violence: those in abusive situations in their homes, people whose neighborhoods have become places of crime and fighting, those for whom gunfire and bombing are daily possibilities. May all of us, who call upon you by many different names, find the peace that we long for. Establish it in

our hearts, in our homes, in our cities, and throughout your world.

We remember, this day as well, the deaths of hundreds and thousands of children and adults that go largely unnoticed, largely unmourned by the world as conflict, drought and famine kill people gradually.

On this weekend that honors the memory of those who died in war, we pray for peace, O God. And we will continue to pray and live in the way of peace until the day when your peace shall be established in our hearts and our world. As we pray, we remember those who died in war for the cause of peace, for those who died in war that others might live, for those who died in war not knowing why they were fighting. Be near to those who mourn the dead of war, those who have lost husband, wife, child, or parent. Keep in your care those who have survived combat but who are injured, disabled, or broken in mind or spirit as well as those whose faith in other people or in you has been weakened or destroyed. Come to us in perfect love; cast out our fear and make us peacemakers.

[Concerns/celebrations/silent prayer]

God of mercy, God of grace, you so often astonish us by granting requests which were only half-formed, by enriching our experience in unexpected ways, by reminding us of factors we had overlooked. However you answer these prayers, may the outcome be that we love you more, understand your purpose better, and trust in you with greater confidence; through Jesus Christ, who teaches us to pray together: "Our Father...

Let us sing together: "O Day of God, Draw Nigh"

