COMMUNITY CHURCH OF WALKER
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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"No matter who you are, or where you are, you are welcome here!"

Health and Human Service Sunday
Fourth Sunday After Epiphany – Year A
January 29, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.

Worship Leaders:
Pastor Michael Small
Liturgist: Deb Farrell
Greeter: Chris Kolp
Special Music: Sabbastain Wilson Webb
Musician: Leisa Bragg
Music Coordinator: Joanna Aamodt

Tech: Gary Jacobson, Aurora Diehl (Video), Esther Covert (Audio)
Spiritual Life, Chancel and Communion Preparation

PRELUDE

WORDS OF WELCOME

One: Today, we gather together with the whole United Church of Christ in observing Health and Human Service Sunday. We bear witness to the tradition, and the history being made today, of how the UCC has embodied extravagant welcome through service. The UCC and its predecessor denominations courageously founded schools, hospitals, and orphanages during times of pandemic, war, and social upheaval. Now, there are more than 400 UCC affiliated health care centers, hospitals, affordable housing and retirement communities, transitional housing for those experiencing homelessness or domestic violence, and service centers for children, youth, families, and those with disabilities. These ministries continue to show up in the most challenging circumstances—and do so with a hope that has come alive. It is thus a day to celebrate how the life of the church is vibrant beyond our church walls and outreach ministries.

So, let us give thanks for this collective work of the Spirit. Let us uplift God's healers and equity weavers, visionaries of freedom, and frontline responders—that together, we may create a just, caring, and compassionate world. Amen.

HYMN **"Immortal, Invisible, God"** (vs. 1 and 4) #1

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: O Foot Washing God, who bends down,
All: who comes prepared with water and linens,
One: who first loved us, so that we may know how to love,
All: we gather here in your Spirit of service.
One: You taught us how no one is greater than the other,
All: no messenger outranks the sender.
One: And so, we come to worship both as givers and receivers,
All: the washers and the washed.
One: We unite at the basin and the table, finding the grace only you can give,
All: to embolden us to go and do likewise.
One: On this Health and Human Service Sunday, let us wrap our towels around our waists,
All: ready to partake in communal care.
One: Let us root ourselves in ritual, steadying us for the Good News at hand,
All: and the sprouts of healing yet to come. Amen.

A TIME OF CENTERING

(During this time of centering, open your hearts to God; be in the present, here and now.)

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

One: Spirit of Extravagant Welcome,
help us to invite all parts of ourselves into worship today.
Guide us to see no stranger within us or around us
as we care for our world as the Body of Christ.
Help us to break down all barriers to belonging
and the systems sustained by suffering and greed.
For, in discipleship there is abundance through togetherness
and your acceptance of all we feel, carry, and desire.
So, today, and on any given Sunday,
use all that we come here with
to build a sanctuary for you. Amen.

MEDITATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

One: O Maker of the Moon, who embraces our ever-changing tides,
All: we come to your shores of living water.
One: We arrive here not alone, but as the beloved community,
All: allowing the weight we bear to be held, as the mountains do for the sea.
One: We call upon the Light of Christ, to illuminate the way of wellness,
All: through the rapids of shared struggle into the rivers of flow.
One: Let us pray:

One: I invite you to place one hand on your head and the other on your lap, or to simply bring awareness to those places. Imagine a ray of divine light coming into the top of your head, traveling all the way down the length of your body—connecting you to the stars above and the ground below.

May the blessing of length grace the places in you that feel out of sorts, out of place, out on your own. May the length of hope tether your mind to God's imagination.

Now place your hands on your hips, or simply bring awareness there. Imagine divine light circling around the whole width of your body—surrounding you with the dignity of taking your place on this earth.

May the blessing of width grace the places in you that feel curled up, torn up, or fed up. May the width of hope hold your mind in God's embrace.

Finally, place one hand in the other, or simply bring awareness there. Imagine divine light radiating from the depth of your hand out to your whole body—spreading the truth that you are here, alive in space and time.

May the blessing of depth grace the places in you that feel two dimensional, too emotional, too unrelatable. May the depth of hope envelop your mind in the heart of God.

And so, may this blessing form its place in you. May you enter this time of worship with an embodied awareness of the divine light within you. Amen.

BEATITUDES FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS

One: Blessed are you on the frontlines, who have sustained risk, toil, and exhaustion. You who have ridden every wave of this crisis and know its depths in ways others never will. Blessed are you,

All: for the kingdom of God is yours.

One: Blessed are you donned in PPE, who have protected, sweated, and explained it a thousand times over. You who have stayed firm for the sake of life. Blessed are you,

All: for the kingdom of God is yours.

One: Blessed are the understaffed, who have shown up, reached out, and adjusted beyond measure. You who make a way out of no way. Blessed are you,

All: for the kingdom of God yours.

One: Blessed are you who deescalate, who have stepped in, listened, and navigated through winds of tension. You who know the eye of the hurricane. Blessed are you,

All: for the kingdom of God yours.

One: Blessings be upon your trauma, your grief, shock, and disappointment. Yours is the experience of prophets and healers who have gone before you. Holy are you,
All: for the kingdom of God yours.
One: Blessed are you on a mission, who seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. You whose care is an expression of your faith. Holy are you,
All: for the kingdom of God yours.
One: Blessed are the inspired, who found new ways to care, collaborate, and solve seemingly impossible problems. You whose service is an expression of the Creator. Holy are you,
All: for the kingdom of God yours.
One: Blessed is the work, yes, but holy are you, too.
All: for God no longer calls us servants, but friends.
One: Let us remember our essential belovedness
All: as we work for the kin-dom of God together. Amen.

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE
One: In the beginning was the Word, but also the Conversation,
All: a way of being through relating, through knowing, and witnessing.
One: Made in your image, we come to confess, but even more so to converse—
All: to bring you our woes and wrongdoings, our soul-searching and longing for understanding.
One: Like Paul, we don't always do the things we want to do, but rather the things we hate.
All: Help us to reflect on how we got to this moment and what might need healing in us.
One: Ignite our hearts with the courage to apologize, to center the care of those we've caused harm.
All: Sift through our ramblings on how to repair, to find methods of mending that honor complexity and boundaries.
One: And journey alongside us as we change our ways, to make discipleship a practice,
All: as we learn, and re-learn, through conversation with you. Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE
One: The One who creates us in the divine image knows each of us intimately, knows us through and through, even to the depths of darkness. May the blinding light of the divine one breakthrough that we know, in this very moment, we have been healed and made whole. Go filled with peace. Amen.

PASSING THE PEACE *(You may nod to your neighbors and say, "The Peace of Christ be with you" – Response "And also with you.")*

SPECIAL MUSIC **""** Sabbastain Wilson Webb

SCRIPTURE: Micah 6:1-8

1 Hear now what YHWH says:
"Come, plead your case before the mountains,
and let the hills hear your voice!
2 Listen to YHWH's indictment, you mountains
and you enduring foundations of the earth;
for YHWH has a dispute with the people,
and is putting Israel on trial.
3 O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I wearied you?
Give me an answer!
4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;
and I sent Moses to lead you,
and Aaron, and Miriam!
5 My people, call to mind the plans
devised by the ruler Balak of Moab,
and how Balaam ben-Beor answered him!
Remember the journey from Shittim to Gilgal,
and recall how YHWH brought you justice!"
6 "What shall I bring when I come before YHWH,
and bow down before God on high?" you ask. "Am I to come before God with burnt offerings?
With year-old calves?
7 Will YHWH be placated by thousands of rams
or ten thousand rivers of oil?
Should I offer my firstborn for my wrongdoings—
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"
8 Listen here, mortal:
God has already made abundantly clear
what "good" is, and what YHWH needs from you:
simply do justice,
love kindness,
and humbly walk with your God.

REFLECTION **"Do Justice. Love Kindness. Walk Humbly."**

HYMN **"Let Justice Flow like Streams"** (all verses) #588

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER (Unison, using debts)

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.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

One: In 1858, one of our UCC forebears, Pastor Louis Edward Nollau, appealed to his congregation, now known as St. Peter's United Church of Christ in St. Louis, for money to build a home to support young children orphaned by a great cholera epidemic. Later, one member chastised Nollau, insisting the church did not have enough funds for such an ambitious project. To this, the pastor replied: "No, … But we have the children."

Today, Pastor Nollau's vision, Evangelical Children's Home, is more than 150 years old and has always evolved and adapted to meet the changing needs of children. Now referred to as "Every Child's Hope," ECH has nearly 200 employees across Missouri, dedicated to preventing child abuse, treating emotional trauma and mental health issues, and providing critical services to 1,400 youth and children annually — in our name, as members of the United Church of Christ. Pastor Nollau's dream — and the dream of the generous people of St. Peter's Church — lives on.

Today, as you present your offering, I invite you to do so believing that great things are possible for those who see great human need as a call to advance the love and compassion of the church of Jesus Christ. Let us be that kind of church, as our forebears have taught us.

SPECIAL MUSIC **“”** Sabbastain Wilson Webb

PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING

One: The friendship of Christ be with you!
All: And also with you!
One: Let us present our acts of service as an offering to our God.
All: And our hearts and minds to be opened at this table.
One: O Spirit of Fellowship,
All: in you may our offering be fruitful.
One: Through the basin and towel you show us the Gospel.
All: Through the bread and the cup you feed us the Good News.
One: Ready us to partake in this sharing,
All: to commune with each other as one Body in you. Amen.

HYMN **"O For A Thousand Tongues"** (all verses) #42

PARTING WORDS

One: Friends, may you be blessed with the growing edge of the Spirit, where hope emerges alive and dissipates all despair.

Let us forage for such grace in the most forgotten places.
Let us find in relationship all we thought we had lost.
And as we go forth from this space,
may we take with us the medicines of compassion and service
to make the world a more just place for all. Amen.

POSTLUDE

For more information about The Council for Health and Human Service Ministries, UCC, please visit: **www.chhsm.org**

For more information about Health and Wholeness advocacy, please visit: **www.ucc.org/health**

Liturgical Elements & Prayers for Health and Human Service Sunday 2023 was written by the Rev. Dr. Elyse Berry, CHHSM's Associate for Advocacy and Leadership Development.

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Due to Covid-19 It is recommended that:
We wear masks.
Keep distance from one another.
If you are feeling unwell, please stay at home!

Please join us for fellowship following the service in the Fellowship Hall.