



Congregational Church of Austin,
United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation

An Open & Affirming Congregation in the United Church of Christ
Order of Worship for 5/26/2024
First Sunday After Pentecost

** Please rise as you are able, in body or in spirit.*

Words for Centering

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund, UCC Mental Health Network Executive Director

I believe that by telling our stories of mental illness, by giving our own testimonies for mental health, we carry our crosses to more healing places, even places of transformation.”

Ringing of the Bells

Prelude

Bourrée

G. F. Händel

Welcome and Announcements

Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel

***Hymn of Celebration**

One Foot/Lead with Love

Please see handout

Call to Worship**

Rev. Dr. CJ Wood

Come, let us worship God, who is creating a new heaven and a new earth. Today is a new day, a fresh start, and a day of new beginnings.

Come, let us worship God, who creates peace out of chaos, calm out of anxiety, and hope out of despair. Even when we are depressed, we trust God is with us.

Come, let us praise God, who chooses to be among us, one of us, a Disabled and Neurodiverse God dwelling among us living with mental health challenges, substance use disorders, brain disorders, and neurodiversity.

Come, let us praise God, who says to each one of us, “no matter who we are or what medications we take or our diagnoses or where we are on life’s journey: I will be your God.”

Come, let us give thanks to God, who promises to wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Come, let us give thanks to God who loves us so much that death, mourning, crying, and pain cannot stop God from loving us.

This is our greatest hope: we are held in God's love.

Come, let us rejoice, for God, the Alpha and Omega, is making all things new!

Reading of the Hebrew Scriptures Lamentations 5:19-22 Rev. Dr. CJ Wood

But you, O Sovereign, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations. Why have you forgotten us completely? Why have you forsaken us these many days? Restore us to yourself, O God, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old—unless you have utterly rejected us, and are angry with us beyond measure.

Reading of the Christian Scriptures John 3:1-8 Rev. Ginny

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'

This is the spirit of God's love. **Thanks be to God.**

***Hymn of Reflection** O Love That Will Not Let Me Go **NCH485

Prayers for God's Beloved Community Rev. Ginny

God of Biodiversity, Neurodiversity, God of a biodiverse world, God of a neurodiverse people, we pray for communities that value neurodiversity. We pray for communities that embrace diverse thoughts and ideas. We pray for communities that make physical space for neurodiverse individuals. We pray for communities that recognize neurodiversity as a community asset. We pray for organizations that can hear us, see us and respond to our neurodiverse needs. We pray for organizations that serve, that care, that love. We pray for organizations that

respond to us simply because we say we have a need. We pray for organizations that adapt to human needs. We pray for people who look past our behavior to understand the needs that drive our behaviors.

We pray for people who understand that behavior is a communication tool. We pray for people who are willing to sacrifice their comfort to protect neurodiversity. We pray for people who have the courage to challenge the systems that reduce neurodiverse needs to right and wrong. We pray for stories that help a neurodiverse society see itself. We pray for stories in which neurodiversity is a cause for celebration. We pray for stories in which people are complex. We pray for stories in which neurodiversity makes us hopeful about the future. We pray for stories that make us weep at the loss of neurodiversity. In your biodiversity, we see the truth of your grace. Thank you. In your neurodiversity, we see the promise of your love. Thank you. Amen.

Anthem

O Love of God

White

Reflecting in Community

Dialogical Sermon with Rev. Dr. CJ Wood and Rev. Ginny

Invitation to Generosity

Rev. Ginny

Offertory Music

The Setting Sun

E. Rocherolle

***Doxology**

Tune, All Creatures of Our God & King

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures here below. Alleluia, Alleluia.

Praise God for all that love has done. Creator, Christ, and Spirit One.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication**

Rev. Dr. CJ Wood

Loving God, open us to a new world, where there is no longer least and greatest, rich and poor, haves and have nots. A world where all are treated as beloved precious children. A world where mental health is understood to be physical health and cared for without stigma or judgement. Until that day comes, bless our small contributions of time, talent and treasures, and may they work towards the building of your new world. Amen.

