

Flowers are given by Bob Procter in memory of his sister, Elizabeth Hood Procter

PRELUDE

Largo

G. F. Handel

Sara Melcher, violin & Lynne Woodman, piano

CALL to WORSHIP

One: God of rainbows that awaken our imagination,

Many: Thank you for the reminders this week of Your promise and presence.

One: God whose acceptance embraces all,

Many: Thank you for the on-going and unfolding call to be a place of safety and shelter.

One: God whose wisdom calls us to draw the circle wide,

Many: We gather as Your people this day to sing and celebrate Your love that will not let us go.

*OPENING HYMN

Sing a New World into Being

Mary Bringle

Sing a new world into being, sound a bold and hopeful theme.

Find a tune for silent yearnings, lend your voice and dare to dream.

Dream a church where all who worship find their lives and loves belong.

Sing a new world into being, sing as Christ inspires your song.

Sing a new world into being, where each gender class and race.

Brings its rainbow gifts and colors to God's limitless embrace.

Where the lines that once divided form instead the ties that bind.

Sing a new world into being. Risk transforming heart and mind.

Sing a new world into being, where the homeless find a home.

Where no children ever hunger, but are filled with God's shalom.

Where all people work for justice, where all hate and vengeance cease.

Sing a new world into being, raise the harmonies of peace.

Sing a new world into being, Join the ancient prophets' cry.

For a time of health and plenty, when all tears have been wiped dry.

When compassion flows like waters, pouring balm for all who grieve.

Sing a new world into being, live the promise you believe.

*OPENING PRAYER

Accepting, affirming, affectionate God, we long for Your presence and peace to be woven into our lives. Too often, we get caught up in the criticism and cynicism of the world. Too often, we confuse our way with Your way. Too often, we rate, rank, and rant our way through each week. Forgive us, O God. Let the treasure of Your presence so capture and captive our lives so worship influences every hour this week. Let Your pearl of wisdom be heard and held as what can ground and guide us every day. In the name of the One who is our light of love, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

COLLAGE LITANY

John Ristow

Many: Blessed are you,

One: As we celebrate the diversity of all of God's people during Pride Month.

Many: Blessed are you,

One: Our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters as we are all made in God's image.

Many: Blessed are you,

One: When you live the truth that all of God's people are one family.

Many: Blessed are you,

One: For celebrating diversity by challenging stereotypes and hypocrisy.

Many: Blessed are you,

One: Who provide a refuge from discrimination and hate so we all might live in peace.

Many: Blessed are you,

One: When you strive toward equality for all - you honor the sacredness of all.

Many: Blessed are you,

One: As we work together to spread a message of faith, hope, and love.

Many: Blessed are you,

One: Who take action on behalf of the marginalized and disenfranchised

Many: Blessed are you,

One: As we unite to eliminate social injustices directed against all of God's people.

Many: Amen,

One: and amen.

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13:44-46

Barbara Shaver

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

SERMON

Treasuring Life

OPEN & AFFIRMING COVENANT

We of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Sarasota, Florida, by vote of our Church Council and ratification by our congregation became an Open and Affirming Congregation in 2001, as documented in our church bylaws. We now re-commit to God and one another our covenant with our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning sisters and brothers. As we celebrate the diversity of the people of God, we commit to remain an Open and Affirming congregation that welcomes all our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters with love and support. We will be a place in which they can be fully themselves, where their full selves are embraced and where their God-given talents are utilized in the life and work of the Church. We honor the vision of those in our

congregation who, more than 20 years ago, founded COLLAGE (Coalition of Laity for Lesbian and Gay Equality) to provide support for LGBTQ+ persons in the congregation and community. In league with COLLAGE, we will continue to reach out to and welcome LGBTQ+ persons into our church family. We will serve as a refuge from hurtful words and harmful actions and work toward eliminating social injustices too often directed against them. This covenant statement is hereby adopted this 16th day of March, 2021, by unanimous vote of our Church Council.

ANTHEM

Jubilate Deo

Alice Jordan

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.

*CLOSING HYMN

Testament to Love

Amanda Udis-Kessler

**Today I come to celebrate the moment when I knew
The grace that fills the universe was for me too.**

**My soul in fearful exile ached, for nothing more than home
But every new rejection left me broken and alone.**

**And in that lonely moment I began to understand I knew
I was accepted for exactly who I am.**

**My life is now a testament to love that won't let go
A love that makes demands on me to give and trust and grow.**

**Each day I sing my song of thanks and offer up my praise
For love that holds me closely in a deep abiding place.**

BENEDICTION:

POSTLUDE

Rejoicing

Ernest Bloch

Sara Melcher, violin & Lynn Woodman, piano