



Visualizing More than Enough

Building a Strong Foundation

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 2, 2026

Rev. Robert Zittel

United in Christ's love, a just world for all.

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Singing Prelude *Bless God, O My Soul*

Sonafrank/Morris

1. Refrain: Maria Passarelli 2. Refrain: All 3. Verse: Maria 4. Refrain: All

(Refrain) **Bless God, O my soul! All within me bless God's name!
Bless God, who was, and is, and shall ever be the same!**

Bless God, O My Soul



Bless God, O my--- soul! All with - in me bless God's name!



Bless God, who was, and--- is, and shall ev - er be----- the same!

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Welcome and Announcements

Good Morning, Venice United Church of Christ.

Grace and Peace to you in the name of Jesus who welcomes each and every one of us into this sacred space.

I am not the Pastor here. My name is Bob Zittel, and I am a retired Pastor filling in for our pastor, Rev. Dr. Barbara Dickason while she and Rob do some important Grand Parenting for a new addition to their family. Rev. Gayle Davis is our liturgist today. Gayle and I were colleagues serving in the United Methodist church and so she will be helping me serve communion very method-ically. The multi-talented Dr. Maria Passarelli is our Song Leader this morning and will also be collaborating with our marvelous director of music Barb Quinn with some very special music on the French Horn. Many thanks to all of our staff and volunteers for all that they have done this week so that we could come together to worship God.

Beautifying our sanctuary today, we have flowers given by two members who are remembering their spouses. That their spouses share a name is a coincidence. So we give thanks for these flowers given by Barb Quinn: "In Loving Memory Of Bob On Our August 6th Anniversary (60th)" and by Dee Rogers: "Love You Bob You'll Always Be My Hero."

For those of us who are worshipping online, whether today or some point in the future, I invite you to like us, share us, and let your presence be known in the comments so that we can keep each other in prayer.

For those of us here in this space of stained glass and compassionate friendship, if you have a prayer request or a joy to share, please make sure that you let the office know, as I want to make sure that we can lift up everyone's prayers as we worship.

For some of you, this is your first time joining us. I hope that you have been warmly greeted and have noted your presence either at our welcome table or through the QR codes found in the pews. We are excited to get to know you. We also have an exciting new gift for you, so if you haven't picked one up yet, please stop at the welcome table or see me following worship.

This morning we are beginning an extended examination of a spiritual practice which we all know and love... Stewardship!

So hold on to your wallets and pocketbooks!

Actually, true Christian Stewardship is about something much more significant than mere moola. It's about generosity.

Author Christian Smith said it well in his work for the generosity project at Notre Dane University: "Generosity is the virtue of giving good things to others freely and abundantly. It is a learned character trait that involves attitude and action entailing both the inclination and actual practice of giving liberally. It is not a haphazard behavior but a basic orientation to life."

So that sets the stage for what we'll consider this morning in this holy, wonderful, ordinary space,

as Venice United Church of Christ,

we empower and invite everyone

to join us in this divine place

that we share on line and in person.

For when we gather, everyone is invited,
no matter who you are
or where you are on life's journey,
and no one is turned away.

Following worship, everyone is invited to gather across the Lane in Naar Hall for coffee and fellowship. Many thanks to Church Family Life and Volunteers who are hosting this time this morning.

During these summer months, we continue to host numerous activities to build connection. On Monday, SpiritFed meets online on Zoom. On Wednesday, the Library is open from 9-12, and Bible Study meets in the conference room at 10:00. On Friday, the Men are meeting at Panera.

There are many ways to get involved here at Venice UCC, whether through activities, volunteering for special projects or helping with our mission projects, or serving on a team or committee. Please check out the information table to explore new ways to connect with the ministries of our church.

For we come to worship an extravagantly generous, steadfastly loving God. May our worship align us again with God's holy purpose — to love one another as Christ loves us.

So Come, beautifully authentic, humbly transforming, faithfully Good-news following body of Christ, and let us Worship God!

We Approach God's Presence

Bringing in the Light of Christ

Softly and Tenderly

Thompson/arr. Burger

Responsive Call to Worship

Come, let us worship God,
whose compassion opens our eyes to abundance.

When the crowds gathered in a deserted place,
Jesus saw their hunger and welcomed them with compassion.

**While the disciples saw only what was lacking,
Jesus asked them to bring what they had.**

Five loaves.

Two fish.

A blessing offered.

A meal shared.

In God's abundance,
there was more than enough.

**So we come with what we have,
trusting God to receive it, bless it, and share it.**

***Hymn**

Praise to the Living God

Wesley

**1. Praise to the living God,
the God of love and light,
whose word brought forth the
myriad suns
and set the worlds in flight;
whose infinite design,
which we but dimly see,
pervades all nature,
making all a cosmic unity.**

**Praise to the living God,
from whom all things derive,
whose Spirit formed upon this sphere
the first faint seeds of life;
who caused them to evolve
unwitting, toward God's goal,
till humankind stood on the earth,
as living, thinking souls.**

Praise to the living God,
 who knows our joy and pain,
 who shares with us our common life,
 the sacred and profane.
 God toils where'er we toil,
 in home and mart and mill;
 and deep within the human heart
 God leads us forward still.

Praise to the living God,
 around, within, above,
 beyond the grasp of human mind,
 but whom we know as love.
 In these tumultuous days,
 so full of hope and strife,
 may we bear witness to the Way,
 O Source and Goal of life.

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Praise to the Living God

Ps. 84:1-2

Curtis Beach, 1966; alt.

1 Praise to the liv - ing God, the God of love and light, Whose
 2 Praise to the liv - ing God, from whom all things de - rive, Whose
 3 Praise to the liv - ing God, who knows our joy and pain, Who
 4 Praise to the liv - ing God, a - round, with - in, a - bove, Be -

word brought forth the myr - iad suns and set the worlds in flight;
 Spir - it formed up - on this sphere the first faint seeds of life;
 shares with us our com - mon life, the sa - cred and pro - fane.
 yond the grasp of hu - man mind, but whom we know as love.

Whose in - fi - nite de - sign, which we but dim - ly see, Per -
 Who caused them to e - volve, un - wit - ting, toward God's goal, Till
 God toils wher-e'er we toil, in home and mart and mill; And
 In these tu - mul-tuous days, so full of hope and strife, May

vades all na - ture, mak - ing all a cos - mic u - ni - ty.
 hu - man-kind stood on the earth, as liv - ing, think - ing souls.
 deep with - in the hu - man heart God leads us for - ward still.
 we bear wit - ness to the Way, O Source and Goal of life.

Curtis Beach, born into a family of several generations of ministers, was educated at Harvard University, the Boston University School of Theology, and the University of Southern California. A minister in the United Church of Christ, Beach authored *The Gospel of Mark: Its Making and Meaning*.

Tune: DIADEMATA S.M.D.
 George J. Elvey, 1868
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***Prayer for Transformation and New Life**

Let us pray:

God of abundance,

You have created a world filled with gifts, yet we so easily see only what is missing. We count what we lack. We protect what we have. We allow fear to convince us that there will never be enough. Forgive us when scarcity narrows our vision and keeps us from sharing with one another.

Open our eyes to the resources already among us.

Teach us the holy practice of reciprocity,

**in which each person gives, each person receives,
and the well-being of one becomes the care of all.**

Receive what we bring,
bless it beyond our imagining,
and form us into a community
where all are welcomed, nourished, and satisfied.
Amen.

***Words of Grace**

Hear the Good News:

Christ meets us in the places where we fear there is not enough,
and invites us to look again.

God's grace is not scarce.

God's compassion is not exhausted.

God's love continues to gather, bless, and nourish us.

We are forgiven, renewed, and invited into the abundance of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

***Response**

Your Grace Is Enough

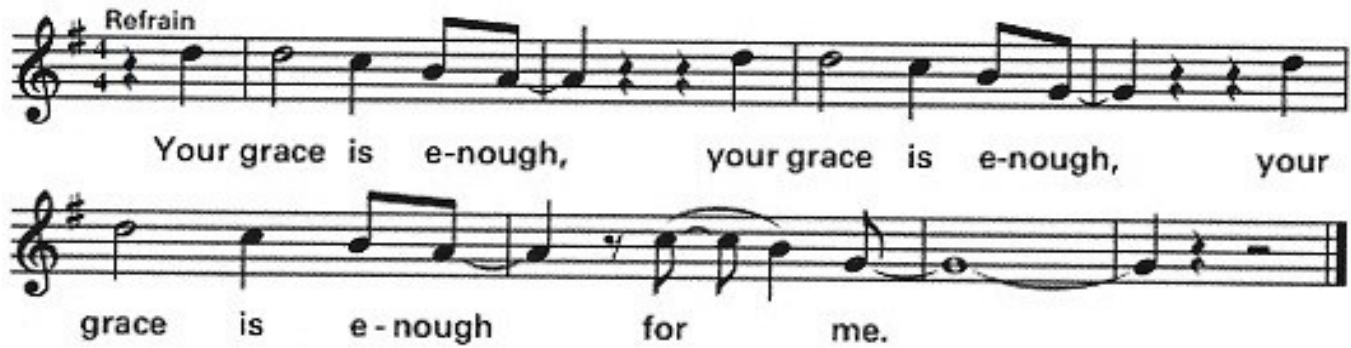
Maher

**Your grace is enough, your grace is enough,
your grace is enough for me. (repeat)**

[Please step back, but don't sit down here.]

Your Grace Is Enough

Matt Maher



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Contemplative Reading *The Soul of Money*¹

Lynne Twist

Almost ten years ago, Philanthropist and Fundraiser Lynne Twist was invited to speak to how both global constructions of money and the way that we each interact with it touches everything — even the heart of who we are as individuals and communities. The result is her book *The Soul of Money*. Today, we will hear about her first interaction with a community who initially had no understanding of money, and invited her and her family to teach them so that they could understand enough to preserve their home.

“In a thriving village deep in the Amazon rain forest, a ten-day hike from any form of civilization as we know it, Chumpi Washikiat and his people are engaged in a bold, brave, risky, and unprecedented venture. They are learning how to use money. Although he is twenty-six years old, Chumpi had had very few interactions with money until a few years ago. His indigenous group, the Achuar, had lived without money for thousands of years. For all that time, generations of Achuar people grew up, worked to raise families, built homes, and maintained communities, all without money. These indigenous people were and are highly attuned to the most

¹ Twist, Lynne. *The Soul of Money: Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Life*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2017. Pg 3,6,7.

significant influences in their life—the forces of nature and their relationships with one another and the forest—but they had no relationship with money. Reciprocity was the social currency. It was understood that everyone shared with everyone else and everyone took care of everyone else. If Tantu’s daughter married Natem’s son, then their friends and neighbors came together to build them a house. When a hunter killed a wild boar, the whole village feasted. Life’s ups and downs were determined mostly by forces of nature. Any battles were fought over matters of honor. Money had nothing to do with any of it.”

“Like Chumpi and the Achuar, we all have an identifiable, though largely unconscious and unexamined, relationship with money that shapes our experience of life and our deepest feelings about ourselves and others. Whether you count your change in dollars, yen, rupees, or drachmas, money is one of the central, linchpin issues in all our lives. It is in mine, and it is a central issue for everyone I’ve ever met, no matter how much or how little money they have.”

“Whether we look at money in the context of our personal or family lives, the workplace, or in the health and welfare of nations, the same picture emerges: Money is the most universally motivating, mischievous, miraculous, maligned, and misunderstood part of contemporary life.”

God is Still Speaking. **Thanks be to God!**

[Please return to your seat.]

Anthem *How Great Thou Art/I Need Thee Every Hour* Hine/Lowry
Medley for French Horn and Piano
Maria Passarelli, *French Horn*

Let us pray:

For the words of challenge, for the images of blessing,
for the spirit of wisdom moving in our midst,
we give you honor and thanks and praise. Amen

Before I read the gospel lesson for this morning, I want to invite you to engage in a bit of an experiment. Please close your eyes and attempt to visualize all the elements of this familiar story. Paint a mental picture of the characters and events of...Matthew 14:13-21 NRSVue

13-21 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish."

And he said, "Bring them here to me."

Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The Word of God. Thanks be to God!

And if your eyes are still closed, you may now open them.

Suppose you were a really good visual artist and you were commissioned by the church to create a painting of what you just saw with your mind’s eye.

Gary Woodrum has put together, and facilitates, a first-rate video system in this sanctuary, and it seemed to me a shame not to take a bit more advantage of it than we usually do.

So, I now get the chance to combine two of my favorite things: visual artistry together with biblical interpretation.

So, hold onto your mental images while I begin with some important words that provide valuable context for this Matthew passage.

The enigmatic “Now when he heard this...” at the beginning of the reading, refers to the fact that the news of an ugly, catastrophic murder has just come to Jesus.

He is grief-stricken at the news that his fellow God-serving cousin known as the Baptist (the one who had, in fact, tenderly baptized Jesus) has died a tragic and sinister death at the hands of King Herod, who had rewarded that entrancing “Salome” dancing girl with anything she might have wished.

And she had conveyed a wish, from her evil mother, which Herod reluctantly grants, for the head of John the Baptist served up on a meat platter.

Jesus had to be totally devastated, and grief struck by this news... and he desperately needed some alone time.

Unfortunately, already at the juncture in his ministry, masses of people are drawn to him and his message and his generous caring ways.

He gets in a boat which can take him to seclusion when he sees the multitude of humanity along the shoreline who are following him, presumably needing him...

And so, his loving, compassionate nature kicks in and he gets out of the boat and begins practicing his healing artistry for their benefit.

And boy do I know about people who know the healing arts and who are compassionate, since I'm proudly married to a nurse who is generously and literally "on the spot" helping homeless people each week.

Jesus and many of his disciples, up to this very day, have more than enough compassion to cause them to forsake their own comfort to give aid to those of us who most desperately need it.

At this point in the Biblical passage, as the day begins to draw to a close...

Your mental images of what's happening in this gospel account should begin to kick in.

Let's examine how your thoughts coincide... or collide. with others who have dwelled upon this passage.

We'll take a look at the first example how one talented individual visualized this scene...

This painting comes from a parish church in Belgium and is attributed to the artist Gaspar De Crayer who worked in the decade from 1638 to 1648.

The work pays extremely short shrift to the idea of serving five thousand.

But one child is featured in the boy bringing the bread gift, and I believe one woman is also featured in the lower left corner of the frame.

Did any of you have a similar mental image?

The next painting is actually rendered into the curved niche of a building.

This work comes from Crete in Greece and is attributed to the monk Nilus in the year 1643.

It also emphasizes Jesus and his disciples but is cast in the iconic style of the Eastern Church.

We'll have more to say and show on that later.

I'm afraid that I have no data at all on the provenance of this next painting,...

Unfortunately, this work doesn't seem to have much space for the women and children mentioned in the text.

They are relegated to the big crowd on the right.

But there are lots of males.

There are, by my count, a full dozen disciples with Jesus.

And just about every image you will see today contains the young boy auditioning for discipleship by lifting up his offering.

Did any of you see it this way in your mind's eye?

I have a little more information about this next painting...

From the Musée des Beaux Arts in France comes this unsigned painting called the "Multiplication de la Pain."

The left side of the frame contains the movers and shakers and donors to the cause, while the right side is devoted to all the recipients.

Thankfully, it prominently features mammas and babies.

Did any of you put an emphasis on women and children?

Here the massed crowd is way off in the background, but the next painting image works to correct this...

From Verona, Italy comes this work by Paolo Farinati who does a good job of illustrating a large and fairly unruly crowd.

I like the addition of a spectator who has climbed a tree, Zaccus like, in order to get a good overview of what is being accomplished.

Did any of you mentally visualize large, unruly crowds?

The next painting you'll see is unsigned and therefore anonymous with respect to its creation.

This work is dated around 1750 and comes from southern Germany.

Note how the artist puts a spotlight on the women and children who are being fed while Jesus and the disciples are doing their

thing very much in the background.

I sort of like that!

Does this square up with any of your mental images?

Next comes the oldest painting I have to show you this morning...

This comes from Upper Austria and is dated around 1471 and is associated with the name, Michael Pacher.

There are some strange, mountainous, castle-like dwellings in the background.

And again, it's the givers on the left and recipients on the right.

But what I find interesting is that, here, Jesus isn't the only one with a halo.

It seems all of his disciples are wearing one.

Only Jesus has the red marks on his halo that prefigure the cross.

Did any of you feature heavenly halos on Jesus?

We move west and stateside for the next painting...

The Metropolitan Museum of Art holds this anonymous work for which the artist required a very wide canvas to properly tell the story of the "Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes."

There is the suggestion of a dancelike movement of many of the characters.

Did any of you have anything like this in your imaginings?

Although the artist nicely features women and children, not well told here is the “Five Thousand” aspect of the tale, which is handled better in the next painting...

The most famous artist to handle this loaves and fishes project was probably the Italian (from that other Venice) named Tintoretto, whose palette here seems to feature the color purple.

He’s got the women, he’s got the children, and he’s got the crowds.

The title of the work is something along the lines of:
“moltiplicazione dei pani e dei pesci.

Does anything here duplicate what you mentally painted?

For the next work I need to attempt the German with, “Brot-vermeh-yung”...

Anton Ritter von Perger was the name of the artist who created this depiction of the story.

Pay particular attention to that big blue sky... devoid of anything that might distract the viewer from the account found in scripture.

Did any of you think up an image along these lines?

Well, guess what?

Not all artists tell the story as a completely human event, as we see in the next work.

Here, artist Tadeusz Kuntze has utilized that sky above the mountain to feature a monumental cherubic dance which is every bit as imposing as anything happening down on earth.

Were there any cherubs in your imaginings?

Other artists also feature this scripture as something heavenly, as we see in this next image...

In 1751 Paulus Antonius Senger created this depiction of the feeding of the multitude in what is now Hungary.

Despite the glare in the photo, you will again see the dance of cherubs in the sky celebrating this achievement.

Something that intrigues me is the depiction of the gentleman at the extreme right-hand corner who looks out at the audience with a knowing smile.

Perhaps it's supposed to be the Matthew gospel writer recording the details of the story.

Perhaps it's a self-portrait of the artist or somebody else who the artist wanted to honor.

Did any of you imagine people you know in your mental images?

We turn to the next image to gain rather complete celestial involvement...

Here's the story told by artist Szymon Czechowicz.

Not content with a mere retinue of cherubs, he's convinced that Jesus is operating right under the watchful eye of God.

The classical depiction has the eye contained in a triangular-shaped opening in the heavenly realm; the three sides of the shape alluding to the Christian concept of the Trinity.

Did anybody incorporate a celestial God in your imaginings?
By the way, I should point out that many of you are carrying a copy of this image in your pockets.

The eye of God looks out from the back of a dollar bill, perched above a massive pyramid which has a Roman numeral inscribed at its base.

The number is seventeen hundred and seventy-six, so you get the idea of what the 250-year-old pyramid stands for.

But the next image requires the observer to look very much upward where great paintings become an integrated component of great architecture...

You are looking heavenward toward the ceiling of the church of Santa Maria Assunta in Trentino, Italy.

Somebody was so enchanted by the gospel story of the loaves and fish that he successfully lobbied for having a permanent ceiling fresco depicting the tale.

Imagine the task that the artist, Valentino Rovisi, had before him... or rather, above him.

He's captured all the elements of the story, including something interesting way up in that heavenly sky.

Let's take a closer look...

Wait a minute!

That's not the eye of God or even the eye of a cherub...

I believe that's the eye of either a surveillance camera or perhaps a

component of a fire suppression system.

Whatever it is, I'm sure the artist Rovisi, who painfully reclined on his back upon scaffolding to paint this masterpiece, would somehow not have approved of this modern addition to his work.

We Christians are, theologically as well as artistically, a very multifaceted bunch, as we can see in this next image...

Our neighbors across Bal Harbour would be most comfortable with an image of Jesus feeding the multitude that looks just like this one.

Orthodox Christianity and the art inextricably linked to it can be traced back to the earliest Christian belief systems.

With its roots in the Greek word *eikon*, simply meaning image, Orthodox icons have always been a strictly controlled and very restrained art form.

Were any of you doing iconic things with your imaginings?

I have yet another “iconic” example in the next image.

Orthodox artists religiously practice their craft, focusing their personal devotion to God, all the while ensuring that the icons are emotionally conservative in style.

Although the very colorful icons can be seen as decorative pieces, their primary function remains as an object of focus for reverence and prayer.

By the way, I have to say that [in this icon] the only female I see depicted is the one dressed in green toward the top of the frame.

The next image is very different from everything we've seen.

The Brooklyn Museum is fortunate to own this painting by the artist James Tissot.

Finally, we have a genuine attempt to put an emphasis on the number of people being served.

It would appear that the hungry hoards are nicely organized in a spiral pathway that leads up and down the mountain.

You have to look very closely to see Jesus perched on a rock in the distance.

It reminds me a bit of the way we modern Christians organize ourselves to be properly fed our communion meal.

Don't panic, don't push, everybody will be fed because there's more than enough!

Which, of course, is the art of Communion Stewardship: providing more than enough for Communion Sunday!

Let's take a look at one last example...

Artist Martin Van Valkenborch has uniquely done something I really, really like.

And so I've saved his rendering for last.

The left two-thirds of his canvas is a straightforward rendering of the story.

But on the right side of the frame you will see farmers diligently tending their fields, perhaps to remind us that every instance of human feeding has to begin with the diligence and industry and

just plain hard work of those who grow our food.

There are even fishing boats pictured on the horizon which speak to the protein in the story as well as in our mouths.

It may be that the very greatest miracle of the feeding of any multitude has to do with whatever God-inspired motivations are driving all those who are devoted to feeding us... more than enough!

So, I'm thinking that at this point I have verbalized and visualized... more than enough. And so, I'll say, "Amen."

We Respond to God's Grace

Congregational Prayers

Joys

For the cranes that visit our property, for the New England VUCC Reunion, for grandchildren, for... *(Please include any new ones and pick any eight offered by the congregation this year:)*

What a wonderful world with God in it. English butter toffee, sisters, our volunteers, healthy family, being here, for moms, this church, phone calls with loved ones, friends, lovely holidays, beautiful weather, getting up each morning, grateful to learn about life from my grandma, fellowship, thankful that the Lord listens to prayers whatever they might be, waking up to spouses and loved ones, for heartfelt messages of joy, belief in God, for everyone gathered in our sacred space this morning

Music, kindness, our volunteers who do so much, my healthy family, to be alive, those who light up our lives, love, my belief in God, wonderful friends, visiting family far away and the joy of coming home, grateful for learning to live a life of joy, coffee and baked goods, playing golf, a place to live, good health, everyone who is here today, the awe of each new day.

Sunshine, rain, quiet still mornings, family, healthy family, wonderful friends, church friends, fog turned to sunshine, friends and neighbors who are like family, sisters, being able to come to church, my dog, being alive, beautiful weather, lovely holiday, getting up in the morning, health, spouse, place to live, the love between spouses and soulmates, grapes and fellowship, belief in God, being able to express ourselves to God, a van that works, love, everything, the beauty of the palms, sunrise, banyan trees, diversity of the congregation, God's new morning painting, the awe

of the moon shining through the clouds and pointing to the star,
music, kindness, learning to walk backwards, sunshine through the
window and a peaceful household

Each beautiful new day, slow mornings, gorgeous sunsets, that we
are able to celebrate our joys — for celebrating joy reminds us that
we share the same source of our joy, the depth of human creativity
and spirit, skilled medical professionals, friendship, safe travels,
gathering together to study God's word, **rebirth and recreation in
communities that empower and hold us as we ask tough
questions of God and each other, those who pitch in and help
out, birthdays, anniversaries, milestones...**

**When we pray for our loved ones, we have a duty of care to
not spread their business without explicit permission. Instead,
as we pray, we hold our loved ones close to our heart and lift
them up to God, trusting that the Spirit intercedes in all of our
prayers, especially those too deep for words.**

Intercessions:

Gina	Rick	Bill
The family and friends of Edwin LeBel		
Faye	Lisa	Bob
Liz	Paula	Vinnie
The family and friends of Pat Bartel		Sandy
Gina	Brian	Lynda
John	Clete	Barbara

Ongoing Prayers for: Jimmy, Christine, Cerenity, Mark, Helen, Gay,
Rev. Ryan's family, Pam, Jack Quinn, Kip, Emily, Basha, Clark

**This morning, we are also remembering the family and friends
of Ellie Reed. As we light this candle, we remember and**

celebrate the many ways that she allowed her light to shine among us.

Those who are struggling with a cancer diagnosis.

We pray for those people who have lost their jobs and their means of supporting their families, ... **pets** that need homes

Everyone impacted by the decisions of governments that choose violence and war instead of diplomacy; all essential workers and all frontline healthcare workers; everyone impacted by recent hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, and flooding;
and

The staff and participants of Word Made Flesh in Sierra Leone, Immokalee Farm Workers, black and brown fathers and their sons, everyone living through domestic violence, people of all religions who are being persecuted because of their faith, all who struggle with or are affected by mental illness and depression. We also pray for law enforcement officers, service men and women, missionaries and rescue workers doing God's work in dangerous places.

(First Sunday: sung)

Silent Prayer

Prayers of the People and our Lord's Prayer²

Creating God,

You have formed a world of beauty, generosity, and interdependence. The earth feeds and sustains us, and our lives are held together through relationships of care, reciprocity, and

trust. Open our eyes to the abundance already surrounding us, and help us recognize that all we possess has been entrusted to us for the flourishing of your whole creation.

When fear tells us there is not enough, widen our vision. When money becomes a measure of worth, security, or success, remind us that our deepest value is found in your love and in our relationships with one another. Teach us to receive with gratitude, to share without fear, and to build communities in which everyone is fed and no one is forgotten.

We pray this morning for those who are grieving, for those who are suffering, for those who are sitting in that place of waiting and not knowing. Soothe our fears, nourish our bodies, and feed our souls with the bread and cup of your compassion and mercy.

We praise you for your vision of a new heaven and a new earth, in which everyone treats each other as your beloved children, as together we sing the prayer that you have taught us:

Our Father, which 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

We Share God's Love

Invitation to Generosity

When the disciples looked at five loaves and two fish, they couldn't imagine how it could be enough. Jesus saw the beginning of a feast. The gifts we offer may sometimes seem small beside the needs of the world. Yet when they are gathered in compassion and shared in community, God uses them to nourish lives, strengthen relationships, and create possibilities we could not produce alone.

As we give, may we loosen our hold on scarcity
and participate in God's vision of more than enough.

(The offering plates are found by each doorway for your use. For those of us online, please follow the QR code.)

***Song of Gratitude**

Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God above, ye heavenly host,
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication**

God of abundance,

Receive these gifts and bless them as Christ blessed the loaves and fish. Gather what we offer, multiply its reach, and use it to nourish your people, strengthen community, and create a world in which everyone has enough. Amen.

Invitation to Holy Communion

Friends, this is Christ's table—

Here, at His table,

We remember that when the crowds surrounded
him in a deserted place, he healed them.

And then, as they were hungry, he gathered what was available,
blessed and shared it, and after everyone had eaten their fill,
they had baskets left over.

Christ's table is like that. Whether we are hungry for healing,
hungry for food, hungry for belonging, or hungry for wholeness,
There is always more than enough here.

For Christ's table has been prepared for you.

So come—not because you have life all figured out, but because
Christ invites you. For all are welcome at this table of grace.

On the night before love was tested,
Jesus gathered with his friends—
friends with troubled hearts,
friends who did not yet understand.

He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and said:

*“This is my body, given for you.
Whenever you eat it, remember me.”*

(Break bread) At this table, all the various ingredients of this gluten-free bread were grown with patience, tenderness and love. They were then gathered and baked into a loaf to be broken and shared together. This bread is a sign: that even what is broken can

become a place where God is revealed

And after supper, Jesus took the cup, saying:

*“This cup is the new covenant in love—
poured out for you and for many.
Whenever you drink it, remember me.”*

(Pour cup) At this table, the grapes used to prepare this cup were pruned and fertilized, gathered by the hands of migrant workers and pressed into the juice that we share together. This cup is a promise: That love is stronger than death, and that God’s life is poured out for all.

Let us pray:

God of abiding presence,
pour out your Spirit upon this bread and this cup, that they may be for us the presence of Christ—the Way that steadies us, the truth that grounds us, the life that renews us.

And pour out your Spirit upon us—that we may be the body of Christ in the world: people who love not only in word, but in action; people who make room for others; people who bear witness with courage and grace.

Unite us with Christ, with one another, and with all who hunger for love that does not fail. Amen.

Come, for the meal is ready!

*(The ministers and servers will prepare the elements;
the congregation is then invited to come
and receive the bread and the cup.
If you cannot come but wish to receive,
the servers will come to you.)*

Communion Meditation *Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)*
Newton/ Tomlin/Giglio/arr. Hayes

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Generous God,

**We thank you for meeting us at this table,
feeding us with your grace, and
reminding us that there is more than enough
in your love.**

**As we leave this place, help us to share
what we have received with generous hearts,
trusting that your compassion continues
to nourish the world through us.**

In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

We Go to Carry the Light

*Hymn

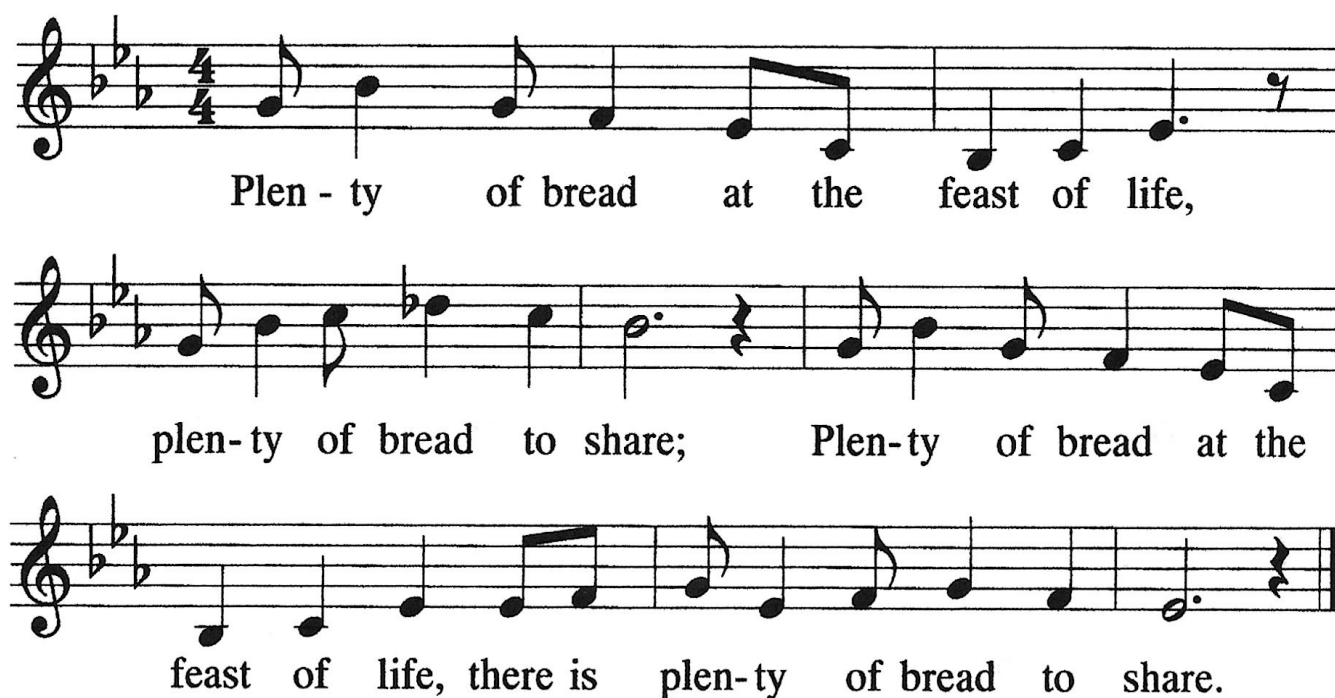
Bread to Share

Haugen

Plenty of bread at the feast of life,
plenty of bread to share;
plenty of bread at the feast of life,
there is plenty of bread to share.
Plenty of fish...
Plenty of room...

BREAD TO SHARE

Marty Haugen



Plen - ty of bread at the feast of life,
plen-ty of bread to share; Plen-ty of bread at the
feast of life, there is plen-ty of bread to share.

2. Plenty of fish..... 3. Plenty of room.....

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***Blessing and Benediction**

Go into the world with eyes opened to abundance.

Bring what you have.

Receive what others offer.

Share without fear.

And may God bless our gifts,

our relationships,

and our common life

until all are welcomed

and all are fed. Amen

***Sending Blessing**

Threefold Amen

Danish

***Postlude** *Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ.* Folk Tune/arr. Carter

**Please remain seated in silence for the Postlude as the
Light of Christ is carried into the world.
The worship has ended; our service begins.**

Supporting Our Service Today

Liturgist and Communion

Assistant: Gayle Davis

Welcome Table: Sandy Barrie

Greeter: Wendy Seeley

Acolyte: Bella Clapham

Head Usher: Gary Leidheiser

Usher Team: Terry Calderone,
George Calderone

Technology Team

Gary Woodrum, Debra Mosely,
Maria Groody, David Jack,
Linda Newton, Wally Davis,
Patty Fjetland

The **Lord's Table** was decorated
by Victoria Augustine

The **Sanctuary Flowers** are given
by Barb Quinn: "In Loving
Memory Of Bob On Our August
6th Anniversary (60th)" and Dee
Rogers "Love You Bob You'll
Always Be My Hero"

The **Church Sign** was changed by
Faye Newton & Lisa Sclafani

Sunday Librarian:

Barbara Talmage

Fellowship Hosts: Church Family
Life and Volunteers



Guest Pastor Rev. Bob Zittel

Senior Minister

Rev. Barbara Dickason, BCC

Staff

Gary Leidheiser: *Custodian*

Marguerite Long:

Administrative Specialist

Natashia Laughnan:

Social Media and

Communications Specialist

Music Staff

Barbara Quinn: *Music Director*

Lynda Weston:

Bella Handbell Director

This Week at a Glance

Monday, August 3

12:00 Noon SpiritFed

Pack a lunch and join us **on ZOOM** for prayer, study and connecting with each other. It's a come-as-you-are space designed to help us confront the loneliness epidemic while growing closer to God.

Click on the link below to join.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83576594637?pwd=U2024sKmOPiy3CyMqV4OarYUtofaom.1>

Meeting ID: 835 7659 4637

Passcode: 913882

5:00 PM VADC—CR

Tuesday, August 4

9:00 AM Staff Meeting

2:30 PM VADC—CR

Wednesday, August 5

9:00 AM - Noon Library Hours

10:00 AM Bible Study—CR

7:00 PM NAMI

Friday, August 7

8:30 AM Men's Coffee—Panera

Sunday, August 9

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

9:00-9:45 AM Library Hour

10:00 AM Worship

11:00-11:15 AM Library Time

Fellowship Time Follows Worship

Coming Events

The church office is open
M-Th, 9-1.

Would you like to donate to VUCC online?

Use this link:

<https://veniceucc.org/give>

Or...Use your Smart Phone to scan the QR code:

and it will take you directly to our donations page.

It is really easy!

