VENICE
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 6, 2026

Rev. Dr. Barbara Dickason, Board Certified Chaplain

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

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September 6, 2026
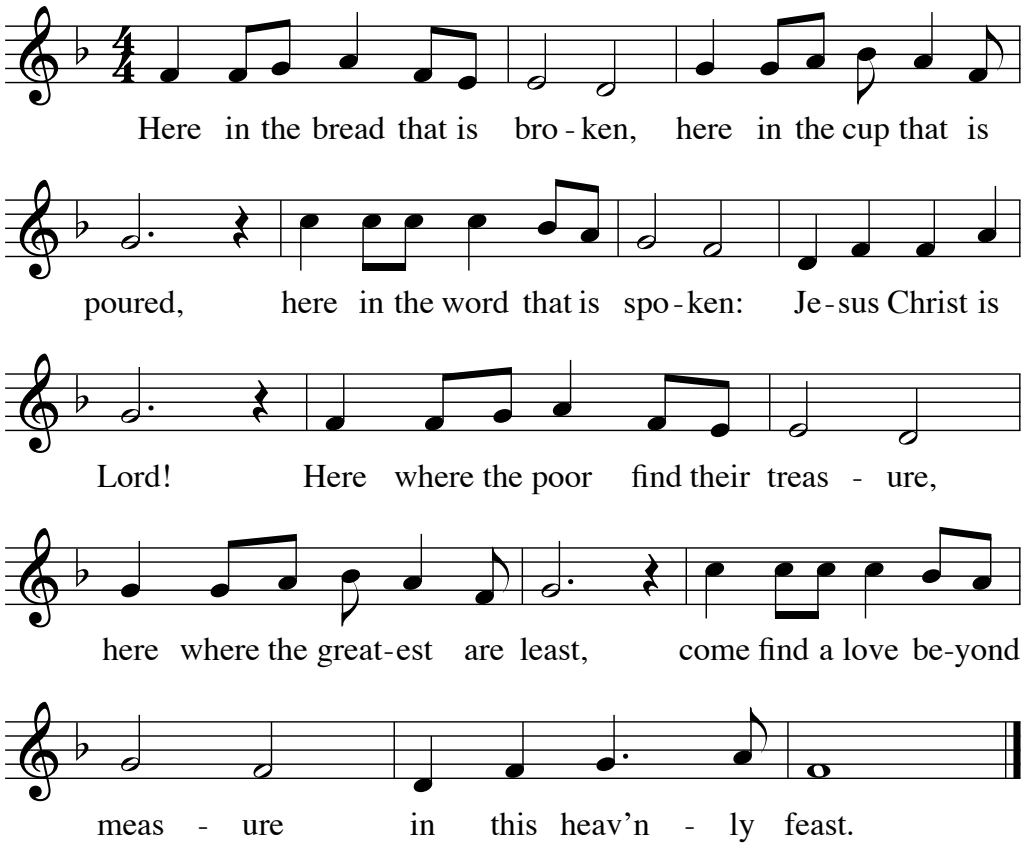
Singing Prelude *Where Two or Three Are Gathered* Lawton

Here in the bread that is broken,
here in the cup that is poured,
here in the word that is spoken:
Jesus Christ is Lord!

Here where the poor find their treasure,
here where the greatest are least,
come find a love beyond measure
in this heav'nly feast.

WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED

Liam Lawton
Arr. Paul A. Tate



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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 Pastor Barb, and Rev. Mel Burrowes is our liturgist and assisting with Communion today. Sue Jack is our Song Leader this morning. 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 "The Girls" in honor of Carolyn Barszcz as she prepares to move back to Rhode Island (two bouquets)

Please mention Barbara Zittel. She signed up for a bouquet after the bulletins were done last week and was upset that her contribution wasn't mentioned in service/Connect.
"and Barbara Zittel in honor of Bob Zittel's birthday."

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.

For 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.

On Monday, The Office is Closed. 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, and the KnitWits will gather in the parlor.

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. Also please note, as our staff are limited in their hours, if you would like to contribute towards next

week's service and have not signed up by the end of today, please call or email the office directly so that your contribution can be recognized accordingly.

As we continue working together to *Build a Strong Foundation*, this month we turn toward *Partnering for Compassion, Justice, and Hope*. Drawing from Resmaa Menakem MSW, LICSW, SEP's *My Grandmother's Hands*, we will consider how racialized trauma shapes our bodies and relationships—and how healing calls us to accept responsibility for one another. Today, Jesus teaches us how communities respond when harm occurs: seeking truth, accountability, repentance, healing, restoration, and the possibility of beginning again. So, as we are "starting from scratch"— we trust Christ's promise to be present among us.

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

Come to the Table Nystrom

Responsive Call to Worship

God calls us together—not as isolated individuals,
but as people responsible for one another.
For where two or three gather in Christ's name,
Christ is present among us.
Christ calls us to speak truth, seek healing and practice forgiveness.
We come to listen, to speak truthfully,
and to seek the healing of our community.
We come with open hearts to partner for compassion, justice, and hope.
Let us worship God!

***Hymn** *Worker God Who Built Creation*[1] Udis-Kessler
Tune: *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*

1. Worker God who built creation,
author of humanity,
Thoughtful planner, joyous potter,
through your work we come to be.
May we labor in your image.
May your love guide all we do.
Help us co-create your kin-dom.
Help us make your dream come true.

2. Worker Jesus, teaching, healing,
sharing gifts of wine and bread,
Strengthening the broken-hearted,
making sure the poor are fed,
May we labor in your image.
May we set the captives free.
Send us ever to the margins.
Rouse our solidarity.

3. Worker Spirit, inspiration,
you infuse each living soul,
Calling us to lives of justice
till each heart is free and whole.
May we labor in your image.
May we tend and heal and praise.
May we strive for life abundant,
glad and grateful all our days.

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[1] New Song Commissioned & Written for Labor Sunday, August 1, 2025
(Tune: *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*)

***Prayer for Transformation and New Life**

Let us pray:

God of healing,
forgive us when we avoid difficult truths,
speak about one another instead of with one another,
or allow hurt to spread through the community.
Settle our bodies, open our hearts,
and give us courage to listen, repent,
establish necessary boundaries, and seek healing.
When relationships are broken,
Help us begin again in the way of Christ.
Amen.

***Words of Grace**

Hear the Good News:

God does not abandon us to the harm we have suffered or caused.
Grace opens the way to repentance, healing, and new life.
In Christ, we may begin again.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

***Response** *Alleluia* Sinclair

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

We Encounter God in the Word

Contemplative Reading *My Grandmother's Hands*[2] Resmaa Menakem

Our contemplative reading comes from *My Grandmother's Hands* by trauma therapist Resmaa Menakem. Menakem uses the term white-body supremacy to name America's privileging of white bodies and the ways that racial hierarchy becomes embedded in institutions, relationships, and nervous systems—producing bodily, reflexive responses that can perpetuate racism even when our conscious beliefs reject it.

"White-body supremacy also harms people who do not have dark skin. If you're a white American, your body has probably inherited a different legacy of trauma that affects white bodies—and, at times, may rekindle old fight, flee, or freeze responses. This trauma goes back centuries—at least as far back as the Middle Ages—and has been passed down from one white body to another for dozens of generations. White bodies traumatized each other in Europe for centuries before they encountered Black and red bodies. This carnage and trauma profoundly affected white bodies and the expressions of their DNA. As we'll see, this historical trauma is closely linked to the development of white-body supremacy in America."

"Trauma … spreads impersonally, of course, and has done so throughout human history. Whenever one group oppresses, victimizes, brutalizes, or marginalizes another, many of the victimized people may suffer trauma, and then pass on that trauma response to their children... Children are highly susceptible to this because their young nervous systems are easily overwhelmed by things that older, more experienced nervous systems are able to override. … [T]he result is a soul wound or intergenerational trauma. When the trauma continues for generation after generation, it is called historical trauma."

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[2] Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 11, 38–39, 62–63.

"Unhealed trauma acts like a rock thrown into a pond; it causes ripples that move outward, affecting many other bodies over time. After months or years, unhealed trauma can appear to become part of someone's personality. Over even longer periods of time, as it is passed on and gets compounded through other bodies in a household, it can become a family norm. And if it gets transmitted and compounded through multiple families and generations, it can start to look like culture. But it isn't culture. It's a traumatic retention that has lost its context over time."

"… [O]ur concepts of whiteness, Blackness, and race were invented in the seventeenth century. While they seem self-evident to Americans today, these concepts would have appeared foreign and bizarre—even outright addled—to an American colonist in the early 1600s. Back then, no one used the term white people, other than perhaps as a descriptor."

"It was only in the late seventeenth century that white Americans began in earnest to formalize a culture of white-body supremacy in order to soothe the dissonance that existed between more powerful and less powerful white bodies; to blow centuries of white-on-white trauma through millions of Black and red bodies; and to attempt to colonize the minds of people of all colors."

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

[Please return to your seat.]

Anthem *Here Am I* Wren/Damon
Susan Jack, *Soloist*

Gospel Reading Matthew 18:15-20 *the Message*

28-30 "If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won't listen, tell the church. If he won't listen to the church, you'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love.

18-20 "Take this most seriously: A yes on earth is yes in heaven; a no on earth is no in heaven. What you say to one another is eternal. I mean this. When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action. And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there."

The Word of God. **Thanks be to God!**

Sermon “Starting from Scratch”

Pastor Barb

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

In the United Church of Christ, whenever someone enters the lengthy process toward ordination, one of their first steps is to meet with their Conference or Association’s Commission on Ministry. In my former denomination, the process was not dissimilar. It was also a multiyear undertaking intended to help both the candidate and the church discern their readiness for ministry.

Yet, despite that denomination’s stated commitment to diversity and equity, it had never really figured out how to shift its demographics. Founded in a small town in the Palatinate region of Germany, its members began immigrating to Pennsylvania in the early 1700s, drawn by the freedom of religious expression they found there. They spread out, began to farm, and formed communities that remained, throughout the centuries, primarily Germanic and rural. With the onset of World War II, their German traditions and language no longer felt safe. Their advocacy of alternative service also distinguished them from their neighbors. And so, in an effort to remain “in the world, but not of the world,” they gradually set aside parts of their heritage and found security within what America was constructing as whiteness.

It was from within this context that I began my ministry. I kept doing what I could to educate myself about injustice, racism, and prejudice. I received a bachelors degree from a Peace Studies department whose students supported the Civil Rights movement and whose primary professor ended up listed in the McCarthy

investigations because of that support. I attended a community celebration and danced with gratitude alongside immigrant Nubians. I enjoyed the flavorful dishes of the Karen people when my daughter was invited to participate in one of their community fundraisers. We sent our child to a school attended by refugees and immigrants from more than sixty nations and chose to buy our homes in diverse neighborhoods. I listened to friends who were willing to share their experiences of prejudice with me.

Yet I remained a white pastor in a white church in a white town. Nothing in that context regularly required me to recognize, much less dismantle, the cultural formation that had taught my body to expect whiteness as normal. The color of my ancestors' skin had allowed them to become part of that construction, and I had learned its assumptions without having to name them.

Eight years ago, however, my life changed, and so did my family's zip codes. After living in the North for most of our lives, a work transfer took us first to Atlanta and then to Louisiana and Texas. In Atlanta, we returned to the United Church of Christ, and I began the process of transferring my ordination.

That was how I found myself in a Zoom meeting with representatives from across the Conference, undergoing an initial assessment of my readiness for ministry. It was my first racially integrated pastoral interview. As the chair began speaking, I felt my body contract before my conscious mind understood why. Then came the internal correction: "Of course he is the chair. This may be a first for you, but this is what normal is supposed to look and feel like."

Later, he asked me, "As a UCC pastor, what will you do to actively combat racism?"

As much as I had worked for justice and peace, as much as I had supported immigrant communities, as much as I had listened and learned, no one had ever asked me that question before.

And I had no ready answer.

Beginning Again

This month, as we continue Building a Strong Foundation, we turn toward Partnering for Compassion, Justice, and Hope. We will be listening to words from Resmaa Menakem's *My Grandmother's Hands* as he helps us recognize that racism is not sustained only by consciously prejudiced ideas. It is also carried through institutions, cultural habits, and bodies that have learned whom to trust, whom to fear, who appears to belong, and who looks like a leader before our conscious minds have spoken a word.

The Commission on Ministry did not reject me because of my unconscious bias. But they did reveal something within me that I needed to continue to work on. His question uncovered something even more difficult: I had been formed within a culture that allowed me to believe that caring about justice was much the same as actively dismantling racism. Yet one can value diversity without surrendering the expectation that everyone else will enter spaces still organized around us. We can welcome people to the table without asking who chose the table, who sits at its head, whose manners govern the conversation, or whose body is still surprised by the person holding authority.

Sometimes the only honest answer is that we must start from scratch—not by discarding everything that has come before, but by admitting that good intentions have not yet created a just community.

When Someone Hurts You

Matthew placed Jesus' teaching within a larger conversation about how a community shaped by God lives together. Jesus had already drawn a child into the center, warned his disciples not to place stumbling blocks before vulnerable people, and told them about a shepherd who searches for one wandering sheep. Only then did he begin speaking about what happens when one member of the community wounds another.

"If a fellow believer hurts you," Jesus said, "go and tell him—work it out between the two of you."

The first movement is toward the person, not toward everyone else. Jesus did not begin with public exposure, whispered alliances, or the quiet accumulation of resentment. He began with a conversation intended to recover a relationship: "If he listens, you've made a friend."

Listening, however, does not mean that the person who was harmed should accept excuses or pretend the injury did not occur. Nor does reconciliation require someone to remain alone with a person who is unsafe. If the one-on-one conversation does not bring truth into the open, then Jesus instructs us to widen the circle: bring one or two others so that the presence of witnesses can keep the process honest. If that does not work, the community must share the responsibility of healing and restoration.

Biblical scholar M. Eugene Boring observed that this passage belongs to Matthew's vision of the church as a community responsible for the well-being of its members. Reconciliation is not a private burden laid entirely upon the person who has been harmed. The community becomes accountable for telling the truth,

protecting those who are vulnerable, confronting what causes injury, and continuing to seek restoration.[3]

Yet even after every effort has failed, Eugene Peterson's rendering in *The Message* preserves a surprising possibility: "You'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love."

Many interpretations have treated Jesus' reference to "a tax collector and sinner" as permission to reject someone permanently. Yet Jesus was known precisely for approaching tax collectors and sinners. He ate with them. He called Matthew from a tax booth. He did not pretend that exploitation was harmless, but neither did he decide that people were beyond the reach of transformation. If the relationship can no longer continue as it has, then the community returns to the beginning. We encounter the person again as someone who needs honesty, repentance, mercy, and a new way of relating.

Starting from scratch does not erase the harm. It refuses to build the future upon the fiction that nothing happened.

That is why Jesus told the community, "What you say to one another is eternal." Their yes and no matter. Their decisions can bind people more tightly to injury, or loosen what has kept them trapped. The familiar promise that Christ is present "where two or three are gathered" is not offered first as reassurance about attendance at a sparsely populated meeting. Within this passage, it is a promise given to people attempting the difficult work of accountability and reconciliation. When we gather to tell the truth, protect one another, seek repentance, and offer God's forgiving love again, Christ is there.

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[3] M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), commentary on Matthew 18:15–20. See also the interpretive essays on Matthew 18:15–20 in David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, eds., *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A*, vol. 4 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).

What Our Bodies Carry

This work is difficult because our bodies often respond before our thoughts catch up. Menakem describes trauma as the body's response to something it experiences as "too much, too fast, or too soon." When a body senses danger, it may constrict, fight, flee, or freeze. Those responses can become embedded not only in individuals, but also within families, institutions, and cultures. An unsettled body can unsettle the bodies around it; a settled presence can help others begin to settle.[4]

That helps me understand what happened during my Commission on Ministry interview. My contraction did not reveal a conclusion I had carefully considered and consciously endorsed. It revealed a story that my body had absorbed from years of seeing white people occupy nearly every position of ecclesial authority around me. My mind could challenge that response, but only after my body had already spoken.

This is one reason conversations about racism can become so difficult before they have truly begun. The mention of race may cause some bodies to brace for accusation, humiliation, or loss. Some become defensive. Some rush to prove their innocence. Some insist that the conversation itself creates division. Others carry the exhaustion of repeatedly explaining wounds that our culture still refuses to see. Long before people reach the substance of the conversation, bodies may already be preparing to fight, flee, or freeze.

We cannot shame one another out of those responses. Neither can we allow them to govern the community. We can slow down enough to notice what is happening within us. We can allow discomfort to

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[4] Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 7–15, 125.

become information rather than command. We can learn to remain present long enough to listen.

When I told myself, “This is what normal is supposed to look and feel like,” I was not instantly freed from everything that had formed me. But I created enough room to remain in the encounter. The question could reach me. And because it reached me, it could begin changing me.

Community Responsibility

This is where Jesus’ teaching becomes more than a procedure for resolving an argument. Community responsibility means that we help one another recognize what we cannot see alone.

There are conversations our wider culture works very hard to prevent us from having. We are told that naming racism is itself racist, that examining whiteness requires self-hatred, or that acknowledging inherited advantage somehow denies the suffering within our own families. These arguments protect us from discomfort, but they also protect the conditions that continue harming our neighbors. They allow us to defend our intentions without examining the consequences of what we have inherited.

Jesus invited his community into another way. Go toward one another. Speak honestly. Listen for the possibility of recovering relationship. Bring others when the truth needs witnesses. Let the community accept responsibility. When the old relationship cannot bear the weight of honesty, begin again with repentance and God’s forgiving love.

For those of us whose bodies have been taught to experience whiteness as normal, starting from scratch may mean noticing who surprises us in positions of authority. It may mean listening without immediately explaining that we meant well. It may mean asking not merely whether we welcome people, but whether our life together

expects them to adapt to us. It may mean receiving the question I was asked in that interview as a question entrusted to all of us: What will we actively do to combat racism?

We do not need a polished answer before we begin. We need the willingness to remain in the room, to notice what contracts within us, and to become accountable for what we do next. We need one another because none of us can see all the ways we have been formed. And we need Christ's presence among us because reconciliation requires more truth, courage, and mercy than any of us carries alone.

In a little while, we will gather around Christ's table. We do not come because we have completed this work. We come because Christ is still forming a people capable of doing it. At this table, no body is more beloved, no ancestry grants greater access, and no one occupies the place of honor by cultural inheritance. We receive the same bread. We share the same cup. We are joined to one body—and entrusted with one another's flourishing.

Perhaps that is where we start: not with certainty that we already know how to build a just community, but with bodies learning to settle in Christ's presence; with ears learning to hear what we have not heard before; with relationships honest enough to name harm and generous enough to seek transformation.

When the question comes, and we discover that we have no ready answer, we do not have to turn away.

We can remain together.

We can listen.

We can let Christ meet us there.

And, by the grace of God, we can start from scratch.

Amen.

1. M. Eugene Boring, “The Gospel of Matthew,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 8 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), commentary on Matthew 18:15–20. See also the interpretive essays on Matthew 18:15–20 in David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, eds., *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A*, vol. 4 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).
2. Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 7–15, 125.

We Respond to God's Grace

Congregational Prayers

Joys

…

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:

Judy
Jim
Vinnie
Sandy
Lynda
Brian
Roger

David
Lisa
Chanel
Paula
Rob
Vicki
Mary

Will
Bob
Phillip
Sandy
Ame and her baby
Edwin
Harry

The family and friends of Ann
Our neighbor and his family
The family and friends of Joseph and Robert
The family and friends of Troy

Added by Natashia 9/3: Can we arrange the prayer list different so that I know which ones should be removed without having to go through the Excel spreadsheet? Something like this? If not, let me know!

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
baby Ansu	Ame and baby	Clete
	Phillip	Judy
	Mary	Carol
	Rob	Sara
		Chip
		David
		Edwin
		Will
		Family/friends of Ann
		Bob

25th Anniversary of 9-11.
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 (young cat)** 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 Prayer
Creating God,

You gather us into a community in which the well-being of each is bound to the well-being of all. Give us courage to speak truthfully, humility to listen, and wisdom to seek accountability without shame or retaliation.

Settle what fear and unhealed pain have unsettled within us. Help us interrupt the harm that might otherwise pass through our bodies, relationships, and communities. Lead us toward repentance, healing, and new life together.

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

God entrusts us with responsibility for one another. Through what we offer, we help create a community where wounds are tended, needs are met, and healing becomes possible.

Let us share our gifts as partners for compassion, justice, and hope.

(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 healing,

Receive these gifts and use them to restore relationship, protect those who are vulnerable, and strengthen our shared work for compassion, justice, and hope. Amen.

Invitation to Holy Communion

Friends, Christ gathers us at this table
not because we are without conflict,
but because grace makes room for truth, repentance, and healing.
Here, we remember that we belong to one another.
Here, Christ meets us and offers again God's forgiving love.

If you have ever wondered whether you belong…
If you have ever carried burdens too heavy to bear…
If you have ever longed for forgiveness or for a place simply to breathe…
Then Christ's table has been prepared for you.

For here we discover that grace is never earned.
It is received.

So come—not because you have it all figured out, but because Christ invites you. For all are welcome at Christ's table.

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 steadfast love,
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. Make us a reflection of your body: partners in compassion, justice, and hope. 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 *Kyrie* Dvorak/arr. Schram

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of grace,

You have gathered and nourished us at Christ's table.

Send us out responsible to and for one another, ready to seek healing, practice forgiveness, and begin again in your love.

Amen.

We Go to Carry the Light

***Hymn** *A Parting Hymn We Sing* Wolfe/Nägeli
Tune: *Blest Be the Tie That Binds*

A parting hymn we sing
around your table, Lord;
again our grateful tribute bring,
our solemn vows record.
Here have we seen your face,
and felt your presence here;
so may the treasure of your grace
in word and life appear.
Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above.

***Blessing and Benediction**

Go now, responsible to and for one another.

Speak truth with love.
Listen with humility.
Seek healing with courage.

And when you must start again,
remember: Christ is among us.

Go in peace. Amen.

***Sending Blessing**	*Threefold Amen*	Danish
***Postlude**	*Lean on Me*	Withers

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: Rev. Mel Burrows
Welcome Table: Posie Gallaher
Greeter: Janet Beardsley
Acolyte: Bella Clapham
Head Usher: Rev. Bob Zittel
Usher Team: Fran Kulak, Wendy Seeley, John Yahres, Barbara Zittel

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 "The Girls" in honor of Carolyn Barszcz as she prepares to move back to Rhode Island

Make sure Barbara Zittel's is mentioned here.

The **Church Sign** was changed by Faye Newton & Lisa Sclafani
Sunday Librarian: Marcia Murphy

Fellowship Hosts:
Church Family Life and Volunteers

Venice UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
God is still speaking,

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, Sept 7
Office Closed

Tuesday, Sept 8
9:00 AM Staff Meeting
10:00 AM Mission Committee—Parlor

Wednesday, Sept 9
9:00 AM - Noon Library Hours
10:00 AM Bible Study—CR
11:00 RCSSC — NH

Thursday, Sept 10
6:00 PM Girl Scouts— Ed Room

Friday, Sept 11
8:30 AM Men's Coffee—Panera
9:00 AM Knit Wits — Parlor

Sunday, Sept 13
Sixteenth 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.

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