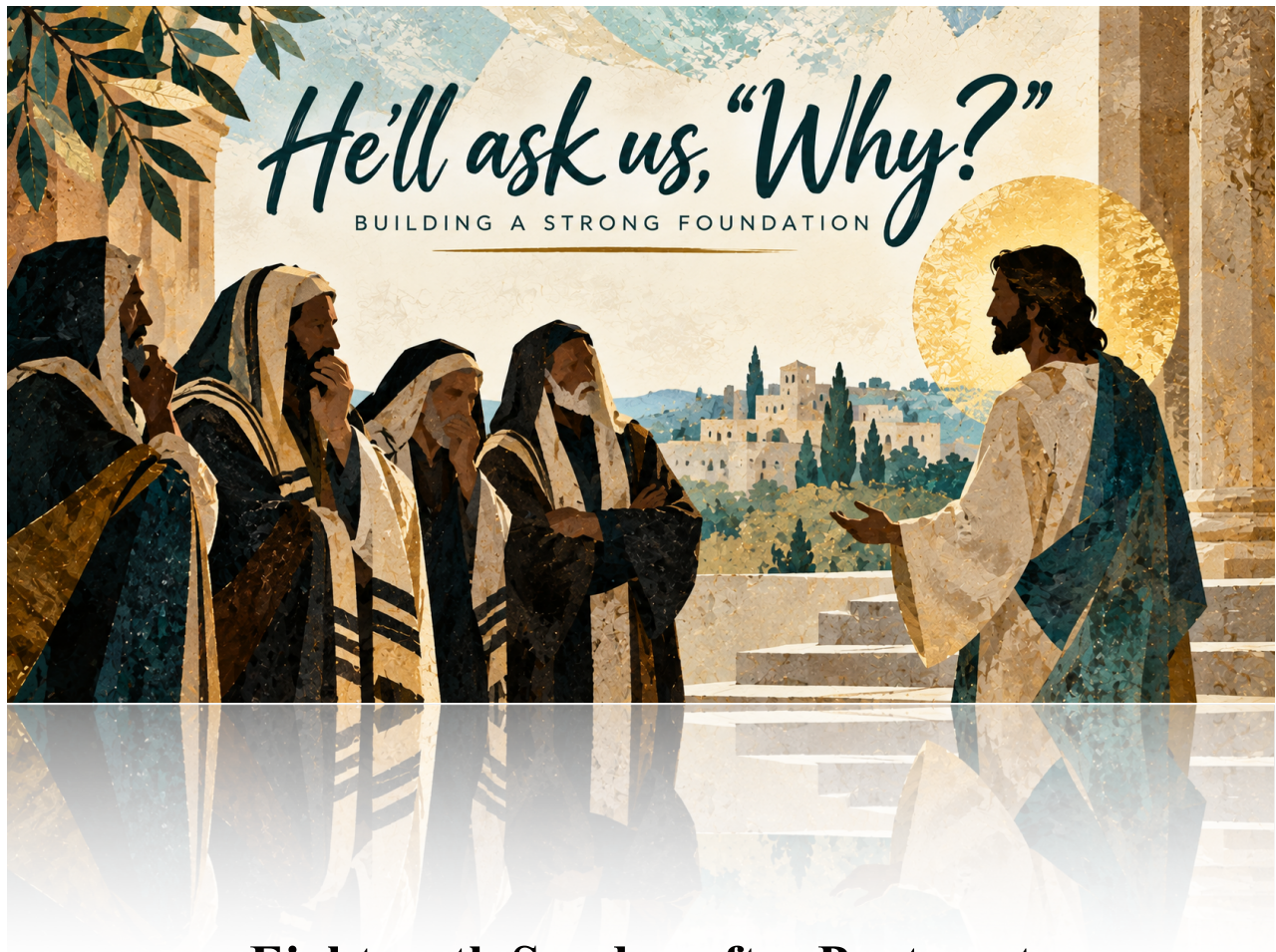




**Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 27, 2026**

Rev. Dr. Barbara Dickason, BCC

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

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Liturgist Pre-service: Please check with Pastor Barb with any questions regarding the readings. Liturgist's words are in Blue. Pastor Barb's are in Red. Instructions are in Green.

Sunday 10:00 am — Walk down the aisle on Pastor Barb's right. Stop before the step for a prayer, then proceed on the floor around to the hand railing to climb to your seat. The Call to Worship is after the Meditation. You are welcome to use your bulletin or the screens for the hymns.

Singing Prelude *Oh, How I Love Jesus* Whitfield/American Tune

**O, how I love Jesus; O, how I love Jesus;
O, how I love Jesus, because he first loved me. (repeat)**

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, Rev. Bob Zittel is our liturgist, and Wally Davis is our song leaders. Many thanks to all of our staff and volunteers for all that they do so that we can come together to worship God.

Beautifying our sanctuary today, we have flowers given by Helen Helgren & Loren Matasek celebrating their 12 year anniversary

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. Call us, drop us an email, or follow the prayer request button in the app, 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 notated 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 please stop by the Welcome Table if you haven't already to pick it up.

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 stay for coffee and fellowship across the lane in Naar Hall. Many thanks to Mel Burrowes & Helen Markus who are serving as our hosts today.

On Monday, SpiritFed will be meeting on Zoom to pray, to share gratitude, and to study and reflect on the scriptures from today and for next week. The link is in the Connect, or you can contact the office if the Connect's link is not working for you and you want to receive it. Our regularly scheduled activities, such as the Men's Friday Panera breakfast, are always welcoming new participants. On Wednesday, we have a few more spaces available if you would like to attend the Interfaith Succoth celebration and meal at Temple Beth Shalom. We are gathering at the church to carpool around 10:15. Please talk to me after worship if you would like to attend.

Coming up the first week in October, mark your calendars for the blessing of the animals. All well behaved pets and their owners are welcome, and if your pet prefers to send a photograph or

stay in the car, provisions are being made for these pets as well. We are also beginning our new sermon series on prayer, highlighting Angela Buchdahl's book, ... which is also on our Reading for Renewal list.

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 become connected to the ministries of our church.

Throughout September, as we have explored what it means to *Partner for Compassion, Justice, and Hope*, Resmaa Menakem has invited us to recognize that healing requires more than understanding what has wounded us. It requires choosing what we will do next. He calls the pain that moves us through discomfort toward healing "clean pain," reminding us that we can remain present with what unsettles us and then choose how to act rather than simply reacting from old patterns.

Today Jesus brings us to a similar place. When religious leaders carefully calculate which answer will protect them, Jesus tells a remarkably simple story about two sons: one says no and then goes; the other says yes and does nothing. The question becomes not simply what we believe, intend, or proclaim, but whether what we say changes how we live. As Menakem writes,

healing requires a choice—and Jesus asks us what our choices look like when they are fleshed out in our lives.

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

'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

Kirkpatrick

Responsive Call to Worship

Go to the Pulpit

Rev. Bob Zittel

God calls us beyond the words we speak and the promises we make.

God calls us to live what we proclaim.

When we have said yes but failed to follow through, God calls us again.

When we have resisted but find courage to change,

God meets us on the way.

So come, with hearts open to transformation.

We come to listen, to respond, and to worship God.

Please rise in body or in spirit to sing, "Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling"

The words are on the screens, and it is sung to the tune of *Ode to Joy*.

Return to chair and stand for the Hymn.

*Hymn

Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling

March/Beethoven

1. Hark, the voice of Jesus calling,
"Who will go and work today?
Fields are white, and harvests waiting.
Who will bear the sheaves away?"
Loud and long the Savior calls us,
rich reward he offers free;
Who will answer, gladly saying,
"Here am I, send me, send me?"

2. If you cannot cross the ocean,
and the distant lands explore,
you can find the lost around you,
you can help them at your door.
If you cannot give your thousands,
you can give the widow's mite.
What you truly give for Jesus
will be precious in his sight.

3. Let none hear you idly saying,
"There is nothing I can do,"
While the lost of earth are dying
and the Savior calls for you.
Take the task he gives you gladly;
let his work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly when he calls you,
"Here I am, send me, send me."

***Prayer for Transformation and New Life**

Return to the pulpit at end of song.

May God hear our hearts as we responsively pray for transformation:

Living God,

God of justice and mercy,

We know how easily good intentions
become substitutes for faithful action.

We say yes to compassion, justice, and love,
yet sometimes resist where they ask something of us.

Forgive us when discomfort becomes an excuse for avoidance,
when protecting what is familiar
matters more to us than following you.

**Give us courage to change our minds,
to change our ways,
and to follow where Christ leads.**

Amen.

***Words of Grace**

Hear the Good News:

God's grace does not require us to pretend
we have always gotten it right.

God gives us room to change, courage to begin again,
and grace for the road ahead.

We are forgiven, renewed, and called once more to follow.

Amen.

Step back from the mic. to sing:

***Response**

Be Not Afraid

Dufford

**Be not afraid. I go before you always.
Come, follow me, and I will give you rest.**

Return to the mic. as the chorus ends.

We Encounter God in the Word

Contemplative Reading *My Grandmother's Hands*¹ Menakem

Please be seated for our contemplative reading.

“For generations, white-body supremacy allowed many white Americans to avoid developing the full range of necessary skills for navigating adulthood. Instead of building resilience, and accepting the full pain and grief and disappointment of human existence, they outsourced some of that pain, grief, and disappointment to dark-skinned bodies. They also hired (or forced) dark bodies to protect them. At the same time, many white Americans tried to protect themselves by retreating to all-white or mostly white enclaves. Paradoxically, these efforts made many white Americans more vulnerable to trauma and caused them to feel more fragile and threatened, in the same way that overprotecting a child encourages him or her to become a helpless, frightened adult. This is the ultimate irony of white-body supremacy: in the name of protecting and serving white Americans, it has done immense harm to them.

You, and millions of other white Americans, now have to make a choice. You can opt for clean pain and work to heal the trauma of white-body supremacy, both in yourself and in others. In moving through this process, you will help create a saner and more compassionate America. Your other option is to choose dirty pain, double down on white-body supremacy, deepen the trauma for everyone, and create far more—and far worse—suffering. You have the power to stop intergenerational and historical trauma in its tracks, and to keep it from spreading from your body into others. Above all, you have the power to heal. But first you have to choose to heal.”

Through Resmaa Menakem, God is Still Speaking. **Thanks be to God!**

¹ Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 211-212.

*Please make your way to the handrail and take a seat.
Thank you for leading this portion of the service.*

Special Music

Give Me Yo' Hand
Rob Dickason, *Alto Saxophonist*

arr. Lloyd, Jr.

²³ Then he was back in the Temple, teaching. The high priests and leaders of the people came up and demanded, “Show us your credentials. Who authorized you to teach here?”

²⁴⁻²⁵ Jesus responded, “First let me ask you a question. You answer my question and I’ll answer yours. About the baptism of John—who authorized it: heaven or humans?”

²⁵⁻²⁷ They were on the spot and knew it. They pulled back into a huddle and whispered, “If we say ‘heaven,’ he’ll ask us why we didn’t believe him; if we say ‘humans,’ we’re up against it with the people because they all hold John up as a prophet.” They decided to concede that round to Jesus. “We don’t know,” they answered.

Jesus said, “Then neither will I answer your question.

²⁸ “Tell me what you think of this story: A man had two sons. He went up to the first and said, ‘

‘Son, go out for the day and work in the vineyard.’

²⁹ “The son answered, ‘I don’t want to.’ Later on he thought better of it and went.

³⁰ “The father gave the same command to the second son. He answered, ‘Sure, glad to.’ But he never went.

³¹⁻³² “Which of the two sons did what the father asked?”

They said, “The first.”

Jesus said, “Yes, and I tell you that crooks and whores are going to precede you into God’s kingdom. John came to you showing you the right road. You turned up your noses at him, but the crooks and whores believed him. Even when you saw their changed lives, you didn’t care enough to change and believe him.

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray:

For the gifts you awaken within us,
for the relationships through which you form us,
and for Christ, who calls us to build your beloved community,
we give you honor and thanks and praise.

Amen.

When the Answer Costs Something

In March of 1965, Federal District Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr. faced a decision whose consequences would reach far beyond his Montgomery courtroom. Days earlier, peaceful marchers attempting to walk from Selma to Montgomery had been beaten by Alabama state troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Now they asked the federal court to protect their right to try again.

Born and raised in Alabama, Johnson knew something about the cost of his decisions. Governor George Wallace had been his law-school classmate. Yet Johnson’s rulings against segregation had already made him an outsider among many white neighbors. A cross had been burned on his lawn. Death threats had become part of his family’s life, and federal marshals provided protection. Even his mother’s home was bombed. The consequences of another ruling were not theoretical.²

But neither was the alternative.

If Johnson protected himself from the consequences of change, Black Alabama residents would continue to bear the consequences of things remaining exactly as they were. And so Johnson ruled that the march could proceed. The wrong being

² “Frank M. Johnson Jr.,” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. Johnson’s civil-rights rulings led to ostracism and threats against him and his family; a cross was burned on his lawn, and federal marshals provided extended protection. See also Federal Judicial Center, “Johnson, Frank Minis, Jr.”

protested, he wrote, was “enormous;” therefore, their right to march in protest of it should be commensurate with that wrong.³

Sometimes that is the conundrum. We can choose the answer that requires something difficult from us, or we can choose the answer that allows us to remain where we are—and somebody else will continue paying the price.

“We Don’t Know”

Throughout September, as we have been *Building a Strong Foundation* by exploring what it means to *Partner for Compassion, Justice, and Hope*, Jesus’s teachings have drawn us deeper into the complicated work of living together. We began by reflecting on community responsibility, moved into the seemingly impossible work of forgiveness, and listened as Jesus told a story about laborers and a landowner that disrupted assumptions about what justice ought to look like. Now Matthew brings us into the Temple, where Jesus asks a question that exposes what may be one of the greatest obstacles to faithful action: sometimes we already know the right answer. We simply do not like where the answer will lead.

Jesus had entered Jerusalem to waving branches and shouting crowds, overturned the tables of the money changers in the Temple, and healed people there. The next day, the chief priests and elders approached him as he taught and demanded, “By whose authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority?”

It was a reasonable question. These were people entrusted with their community’s religious life, with responsibilities, traditions, and structures meant to preserve it. And Jesus stood in the

³ “Frank M. Johnson Jr.,” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*. In permitting the Selma-to-Montgomery march, Johnson wrote that the extent of the right to demonstrate should be “commensurate with the enormity of the wrongs” being protested, adding, “In this case, the wrongs are enormous.”

middle of it, asking them to consider whether God might be doing something they had not authorized.⁴

Jesus answered with a question of his own.

“Where did John’s baptism come from? Was it from heaven, or from humans?”

And suddenly the story slows down enough for us to overhear their conversation.

“If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he’ll ask us, ‘Why didn’t you believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From humans,’ we’re afraid of the people because everybody considers John a prophet.”

They understood the question perfectly — which is why this passage so uncomfortable.

They did not need more information. They needed an answer that would allow them to remain where they were.

Jesus’ question about John was more than a clever way of avoiding their challenge. John also stood outside established religious authority calling people to change direction, and the leaders had chosen not to respond. By asking whether John’s authority came from heaven or human beings, Jesus placed John and himself within that long, uncomfortable stream of prophets whose authority came from God even when established leaders refused to recognize it.⁵

⁴ Kathryn D. Blanchard, “Theological Perspective,” and Charlotte Dudley Cleghorn, “Pastoral Perspective,” in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary*, Year A, vol. 4, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 116–21. Both emphasize the Temple context and the reasonableness of the leaders’ question following Jesus’ actions there.

⁵ M. Eugene Boring, “Matthew,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 8, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 408–10; Blanchard, “Theological Perspective,” 116–21. Boring understands Jesus’ appeal to John as more than a debating strategy: John and Jesus stand within the prophetic succession of those who bear God’s word and are rejected by established leaders.

If they acknowledged that John's ministry came from God, then they would have to concede that God had been speaking and they had refused to listen. They might have to reconsider their judgments, assumptions, perhaps even their understanding of their own authority. They might have to change.

But the other answer was costly too. If they dismissed John, they would dismiss someone the crowds recognized as a prophet. Their huddle was not a search for truth, but for the answer that would leave them least exposed.

So they found a third answer.

"We don't know."

Sometimes those are faithful words. There are things we genuinely do not know, and humility requires us to admit it. But uncertainty that keeps us searching is different from uncertainty that protects us from deciding. Here, "We don't know" allows the leaders to avoid taking a stand on something they understand well enough to know what either answer will require of them.⁶

And Jesus would not let them hide there.

The Son Who Changed His Mind

Instead, Jesus told them a story.

A father had two sons. He went to the first and said, "Son, go and work in the vineyard today."

The son refused.

Sometime afterward, something happened. Perhaps he reconsidered what his father had asked, rescheduled another

⁶ Boring, "Matthew," 409–10. Boring distinguishes the leaders' response from genuine religious humility: "We don't know" can be an appropriate confession, but here it becomes a refusal to decide when the search for truth has reached the point at which a stand must be taken.

obligation, or realized his first response had come too quickly. Whatever happened, he changed his mind and went.

Meanwhile, the father approached the second son with the same invitation, and this son knew exactly what to say: “I will go, sir.”

It was respectful. Appropriate. The kind of answer a father might hope to hear. But, the son did not go.

Then Jesus asked the religious leaders another question: “Which of the two did the will of his father?”

“The first,” they replied.

And there it is — they knew.

The story made plain something they already understood: saying the right thing and doing God’s work are not necessarily the same. For once they answer, they have named for themselves the difference between professing allegiance to God and actually allowing that allegiance to change what they do.⁷

Even still, Jesus’ story leaves extraordinary room for change.

Yes, the first son got it wrong. He said no. He resisted. ...but then he changed his mind.

This is an important part of the story, particularly in light of the conversations we have been having together this month. For if our work of confronting racialized trauma, white-body supremacy, injustice, or any of the other patterns woven deeply into our common life requires us first to prove that we have always gotten everything right, none of us is going very far.

⁷ Blanchard, “Theological Perspective,” and Cleghorn, “Pastoral Perspective,” in *Feasting on the Word*, 116–21. Blanchard emphasizes that righteousness is revealed in doing rather than merely professing, while Cleghorn emphasizes Jesus’ questions as invitations to transformation rather than exercises in producing correct answers.

But that is not the story Jesus tells.

Nor is Jesus simply offering a proverb about actions speaking louder than words. After the leaders answer, he returns immediately to John. Tax collectors and prostitutes responded to John's "way of righteousness," while the religious leaders had not. This is not a competition between believing and doing, as though Jesus were asking us to choose one over the other. Responding to what God is doing takes shape in the direction of a life.⁸

And there-in lies their conundrum.

"Even when you saw their changed lives, you didn't care enough to change and believe him."

They saw. They had watched other people change. And now, they were being offered another opportunity to reconsider what they thought they knew. Their response to John did not have to be their final response to God.

The question was not whether the first son ever said no.

The question is what happens after realizing there is another way to respond.

What Happens in Us

Throughout this month, Resmaa Menakem has helped us to understand racialized trauma not simply as ideas in our minds, but as patterns carried in bodies, communities, institutions, and generations. Such change can feel threatening even when we understand why it is necessary.

⁸ Lewis R. Donelson, "Exegetical Perspective," in *Feasting on the Word*, 116–21; Boring, "Matthew," 411–12. Donelson cautions against reducing the parable to a generic contrast between words and actions. Jesus' return to John in v. 32 locates the parable specifically in the response to John's "way of righteousness"; in Matthew, receiving the message of John and Jesus takes concrete form in a changed life.

When something challenges the constructions that tell us where we belong, how things work, or who we are, our bodies can respond before our carefully considered convictions catch up. We protect. We defend. We withdraw. We explain. Sometimes we become remarkably skilled at finding reasons why now is not the right time.

Menakem asks us not to condemn those reactions or rush past them, but to notice them. When the patterns of white-body supremacy or white fragility arise reflexively within us, he invites us to pay attention to what is happening in our bodies—the sensations, images, emotions, impulses, and meanings that surface—and to resist the urge either to act from them immediately or to force them away. We can remain present long enough for our bodies to settle and then choose our response from the best parts of ourselves.⁹

In other words, our first response does not have to become our final action.

Which is fortunate, for like the first son our first ‘no’ may not have been maliciously intended, but neither does it mean that the consequences disappear.

Because our discomfort and somebody else’s suffering are not equivalent costs.

Menakem describes a choice between what he calls clean pain and dirty pain. Clean pain asks us to remain within the grief, vulnerability, discomfort, and difficulty through which healing and change become possible. Dirty pain avoids that discomfort and passes it onward. In the particular history of white-body supremacy, Menakem argues, generations of white Americans

⁹ Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 210–12.

learned to outsource portions of their pain, fear, and vulnerability to dark-skinned bodies. Avoiding the pain did not make it disappear. It determined who would carry more of it.¹⁰

Judge Johnson could have wanted racial equality and still found reasons to avoid issuing unpopular rulings. He could have recognized the injustice of denying Black Alabama residents access to the ballot while deciding another judge, another court, another year might be better positioned to address it. But while he waited for a safer moment, those denied the vote would keep paying for his safety.

But the question that the religious leaders feared that Jesus would ask is precisely the one we wrestle with this morning:

“He’ll ask us, ‘Why?’”

If you knew it was from God, then why didn’t you listen?

Why, when you recognized something of God at work, did nothing change?

Why, when you could see what was happening to another human being, did preserving what was familiar seem more important?

Why, when you knew that something was unjust, did the difficulty of changing it become a reason for somebody else to keep living with the injustice?

If we imagine God keeping a record of every failure, these questions can sound accusatory. But our God is a God of invitation and transformation, as Jesus’ story reveals. Like the

¹⁰ Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands*, 211–12. Menakem describes the choice to face and heal the trauma of white-body supremacy rather than continuing to transmit it, connecting that choice to the distinction between clean pain, through which healing becomes possible, and dirty pain, which perpetuates trauma.

first son, we still have time to change our minds, head to God's vineyard, and begin the work.

Which may be one of the most hopeful things Jesus says to us in this entire passage.

Because there are things we know now that we did not know twenty, forty, sixty years ago; experiences we understand differently because somebody trusted us enough to tell us their story; words we once used without thinking that we hear differently now; assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, poverty, disability, immigration, or belonging inherited so thoroughly we once mistook them for the natural order of things.

Faithfulness does not require us to pretend otherwise. It asks what we do now.

So this week, when we notice ourselves reaching instinctively for "I don't know," simply because knowing might require something from us, let's stay in that space a while before responding. Instead of rushing to defend ourselves or retreating from the discomfort, let's ask a different question: Who bears the cost if nothing changes?

And then, instead of shaming ourselves for our first response, let's do what the first son did and change direction.

When Waiting Has a Cost

Two years before Judge Johnson protected the Selma marchers, another group of religious leaders in Alabama faced their own conundrum.

In April 1963, eight white prominent Alabama clergy published a statement during the Birmingham campaign. Most had been working against segregation in their own communities. But they criticized the Birmingham movement as "unwise and untimely"

and urged Black citizens to pursue their grievances through the courts and negotiations rather than in the streets.¹¹

Their position sounded reasonable, progressive even.

The problem was: who had to pay for waiting?

While white clergy counseled patience, Black families continued living under segregation. Black children still faced a world that told them where they could go, where they could sit, what schools they could attend, and what their lives were worth.

Sitting in a Birmingham jail for participating in the demonstrations they criticized, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. read their statement.

Then he wrote to his fellow clergy, acknowledging where they had acted courageously while challenging the distance between recognizing that racial injustice was wrong and accepting the disruption necessary to change it. The assumption that time itself would eventually solve injustice overlooked a painful reality: those not suffering it were the ones recommending patience to those who were.¹²

Beneath that long letter is a question much like the one echoing through the Temple.

Why?

If every person bears God's image, why should protecting order matter more than challenging the white-bodied supremacy that wounds us all?

¹¹ "A Call for Unity," April 12, 1963, statement by eight Alabama religious leaders. The statement characterized the Birmingham demonstrations as "unwise and untimely" and advocated negotiation and legal remedies rather than demonstrations.

¹² Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963. King responded directly to the eight clergy, challenging both their call for patience and the assumption that the passage of time itself would bring justice.

The eight clergy could not go back and change their statement. But Jesus never asked the first son to erase his no. He asked him to go into the vineyard.

And somewhere between his first answer and what he finally did, the son changed his mind.

Perhaps that is where Jesus leaves us as this September series ends: not outside the vineyard deciding on the best answer, but in God's vineyard getting to work.

There will be moments when the road before us costs something. There will be moments when remaining where we are seems easier. In those moments, perhaps we can remember Judge Johnson in his Alabama courtroom, the clergy in Birmingham, the two sons before their father, and the question the leaders feared Jesus would ask.

“He’ll ask us, ‘Why?’”

And perhaps, when he does, we will discover that the question is not meant to trap us in what we once said or did.

It is an invitation to notice who carries the cost of our staying where we are, to listen again for God, and—however long it takes us—to change our minds and go.

Amen.

We Respond to God's Grace

Congregational Prayers

Joys

Good Medical Tests

What a wonderful world with God in it.

Beautiful weather,

Getting up each morning,

Thankful that the Lord listens to prayers whatever they might be,

Music,

Kindness,

Our volunteers who do so much,

Those who light up our lives,

love,

playing golf,

the awe of each new day.

friends and neighbors who are like family,

being able to come to church,

being able to express ourselves to God,

diversity of the congregation,

God's new morning painting,

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,

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:

WEEK OF SEPT 20 TO SEPT 27

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Family/friends of Sandy Barrie	Greg Seeley	Graham
Neal (requested by Ginnie Behan)	Bridgett	
Derrick (requested by Debra Bowser)	Vicki and Sandy Protze	
Morgan	Nancy Besel	
Cindy (requested by Barbara Allaire)	Gene	

Jimmy, Christine, Cerenity, Mark, Helen, Gay, Rev. Ryan's family, Pam, Jack, Rick, Kip, Emily

We are lighting a candle this morning in honor and memory of Sandy Barrie, who graduated into her eternal life with God on Monday, surrounded by so many people who loved her and sat vigil with her.

Survived by daughter, grandchildren and great grandchild Alison and Francis Boutilier III, Meghan, Kyle, Lauren, and Riley, son Todd, and cousin Kenneth Morin, she has now rejoined her husband, Bruce, and parents Edward and Ethel Olson.

Many here remember her enjoyment of singing in the choir, helping with kids activities, her great smile at the welcome table, and her hugs.

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

We pray for everyone to be healthy,

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.

(Fourth Sunday: alternative)

Silent Prayer

Prayers of the People and our Lord's Prayer
Transforming God,

You call us toward lives in which our words and actions belong together. Yet we know how easy it is to say yes to compassion, justice, and hope while hesitating when following you becomes uncomfortable. Give us courage to notice the places where fear, habit, and privilege shape our responses, and enough trust in you to choose another way.

Help us to faithfully live into the work you have given us. When change asks us to move through discomfort rather than around it, settle our bodies. When we recognize harm that has been carried from one generation into another, help us interrupt it. May what we profess with our lips become visible in the ways we live, love, repair, and act.

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:

**O Cosmic Birther, from whom the Breath of Life comes,
who fills all realms of sound, light and vibration.
May Your light be experienced in my utmost holiest.
Your Heavenly Domain approaches.**

Let Your will come true in the universe *(all that vibrates)*

just as on earth (*that is material and dense*).
Give us wisdom (*understanding, assistance*)
for our daily need,
detach the fetters of faults that bind us,
like we let go the guilt of others.
Let us not be lost in superficial things
(*materialism, common temptations*),
but let us be freed from that what keeps us
off from our true purpose.
From You comes the all-working will,
the lively strength to act,
the song that beautifies all and renews itself
from age to age.
Sealed in trust, faith and truth.
(I confirm with my entire being).
Amen.¹³

Musical Response *We Sing of Your Glory* Trad. Latin American

**We sing of your glory, we praise you again,
for you are eternal. Amen. Amen.**

**We sing of your power and honor again,
for you are eternal. Amen. Amen.**

¹³ From the Original Aramaic, a translation. minnesotaumc.org

We Share God's Love

Invitation to Generosity

Jesus asks which son did what the father asked. The answer is found not in what either son promised, but in what he actually did. Generosity gives our gratitude a living form. Through the gifts we share and what we offer of ourselves, we participate in God's work of compassion, justice, and hope.

Let us give as people willing to put love into action.

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

***Song of Gratitude** *For Your Generous Providing*¹⁴ Moore/Fisher
Sung to the tune of HOLY MANNA (*Christians, We Have Met to Worship*)

**For your generous providing
which sustains us all our days,
for your Spirit here residing,
we proclaim our heartfelt praise.
Through the depths of joy and sorrow,
though the road be smooth or rough,
fearless, we can face tomorrow
for your grace will be enough.**

***Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication**

God of love,

Receive these gifts and all that we offer.

**Turn our gratitude into action, our compassion into service,
and our hope into work for justice.**

Use us and these gifts

to help make your love visible in the world. Amen.

¹⁴ *For Your Generous Providing*. Moore/Fisher. For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com CCLI Song # 2590307 CCLI License # 11176734

We Go to Carry the Light

***Hymn**

*Draw the Circle Wide*¹⁵

Light/Miller

*After the song leader introduces the refrain,
join the refrain for the second and remaining times.*

**Draw the circle, draw the circle wide.
Draw the circle, draw the circle wide.
No one stands alone, we'll stand side by side.
Draw the circle, draw the circle wide.**

Draw the Circle Wide

Words: Gordon Light Music: Mark Miller ©2008 One License #A-743301

The musical score is written on three staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff begins with a D chord, followed by a G/D chord, and then another D chord. The lyrics are: "Draw the cir - cle, draw the cir - cle wide. Draw the". The second staff continues the melody with the lyrics: "cir - cle, draw the cir - cle wide. No one stands a-lone, we'll stand side by". The third staff concludes the phrase with the lyrics: "side. Draw the cir - cle, draw the cir - cle wide. Draw the".

¹⁵ Draw the Circle Wide. Words: Gordon Light Music: Mark Miller Copyright ©2008 One License #A-743301. All Rights Reserved. Used with Permission.

***Blessing and Benediction**

Go now, not only saying yes to God, but living that yes.
When the way is uncomfortable,
 may you have courage to keep going.
When you discover another way is needed,
 may you have courage to change.
And may the love we proclaim keep becoming the love we practice.
Go in peace. Amen.

***Sending Blessing** *Go Ye, Go Ye into the World* Sleeth

**Go ye, go ye into the world,
and make disciples of all the nations.
Go ye, go ye into the world,
and I will be with you there!**

***Postlude** *Here I Am, Lord* Schutte/arr. Schrader

**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. Bob Zittel

Song Leader: Wally Davis

Welcome Table: Fran Kulak

Greeter: Posie Gallaher

Acolyte: Bella Clapham

Head Usher: Gary Leidheiser

Usher Team: Leslie Chabek, Rob

Dickason, Sharon Leidheiser,

Holly Vincent

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 Helen Helgren & Loren
Matasel celebrating their 12 year
anniversary

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

Sunday Librarian: Toni Yahres

Fellowship Hosts:

Mel Burrowes & Helen Markus



Senior Minister

Rev. Dr. Barbara Dickason, BCC

Staff

Gary Leidheiser: *Custodian*

Marguerite Long:

Administrative Specialist

Natashia Laughnan:

Social Media and

Communications Specialist

Barbara Quinn: *Music Director*

Lynda Weston:

Bella Handbell Director

This Week at a Glance

Monday, September 28

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.

6:30 PM BRIDGE - P

Tuesday, September 29

9:00 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, September 30

9:00 AM - Noon Library Hours

10:00 AM Bible Study—CR

6:30 PM CHOIR

Thursday, October 1

10:00 AM Garden Club—NH

6:00 PM Girl Scouts - Ed Room

Friday, October 2

8:30 AM Men's Coffee—Panera

9:00 AM Church Women United Board Meeting—CR

Saturday, October 3

8:30 AM Men's Breakfast—NH

Sunday, October 4

9am Choir

World Communion Sunday

Sacrament of Holy Communion

9:00-9:45 AM Library Hour

10:00 AM Worship

3:00 pm Blessing of the Animals

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!

