



"Holy Ground," Lauren Wright Pittman
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THE 22nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
A Service of the Word

August 30, 2020 ✦ 10:00 a.m.

Welcome to the Storrs Congregational Church, United Church of Christ!

As we say at nearly every worship service, “No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey God welcomes you... and so do we.” We take these words seriously. We strive to be a community as diverse and hospitable as God’s kingdom. We don’t all look or act alike; God knows we don’t all think alike. We don’t all read the Bible the same way. We come from different religious backgrounds, we bring different questions, and we carry different burdens. But every Sunday, we worship God together as one.

We do Sunday morning in some pretty traditional ways. We study the teachings and the actions of Jesus. We gather around the waters of grace and the feast table of Christ, just as Christians have for nearly two thousand years. Some of the songs we sing are ones our grandparents might also have sung in their day. Yet, in our preaching and prayers, we wrestle with the challenges of the modern world. We hope your heart will hear something personal and relevant this morning—a word of comfort, a spur to action, a call to a deeper relationship with God.

Restrooms are available in the Parish House building. We ask that you especially avoid congregating in hallways or any other spaces *inside* the buildings, as a precaution in this time of COVID-19.

Thank you for turning off cell phones and other devices, and also for refraining from flash photography.

Children, too, are welcome at all services. It is important for families to worship together. Don’t feel your child must be absolutely quiet or still, for we are glad to have children—and all their wiggles, giggles, and squiggles—as part of our community and worship life! After all... as an old saying goes, “faith is caught, not taught!”

The Sacrament of Holy Communion: *All* are welcome, including children, to share in the feast at Christ’s table. Currently, we celebrate Communion during the 10 AM Festival Worship on the first Sunday of each month and certain other holy days.

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism: We gladly offer the sign and seal of God’s grace in the waters of baptism, both to children and adults of any age. *For more information, contact the pastor.*

The language of worship is rich and diverse, and yet always inadequate to express the fullness of the divine. In our worship life, we strive to use inclusive language for humanity and expansive imagery for the divine, while respecting the poetry and imagery of texts handed down to us from the ages. Honoring our diversity, in those places where we speak or sing together, worshippers may use language with which they are comfortable or familiar.

The 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Moses hesitates, asks for God’s credentials, and hears God’s mysterious revelation as ‘I am who I am’: beyond definition by any comparison or contrast, but One who simply is ... who he is—not one understood in terms of other things, but the One in terms of whom everything else finds its meaning. The desert seems a fitting place for such a revelation: the desert, itself devoid of anything in terms of which comparison might be made, the desert whose barrenness matches, by contrast, the transcendent fullness of God.”

— *Andrew Louth, in The Wilderness of God*

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit gathers us in unity on the first day, the day of Christ’s resurrection

Prelude

Dr. Patricia Snyder, carillon

Greeting

One: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Many: **And also with you.**

Welcome & News from our Life Together

Call to Worship

One: This place for us is Holy Ground.
The place where we sing songs of praise to the Lord,
and repeat the stories of faith
that inspire us to respond to Christ’s love.

Many: **God called us here,
in whispering winds and in burning flames,
and with divine presence
disarms us of the barriers we have placed around us.**

One: Instead God meets us in our vulnerability,
our humanity.

Many: **Praise be! Let us worship the Lord.**

*For today's music, we ask in-person worshippers to meditate on the words and sing along within your hearts, **refraining from singing aloud** as a super-precaution against aerosol virus transmission.*

Hymn — “Be Thou My Vision”

SLANE

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
Thou my best thought, by day or by night, waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true Word; I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tower; raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise; thou, mine inheritance, now and always;
Thou and thou only, first in my heart, High King of Heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won, may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Prayer of the Day

One: Let us pray.

***Many:* God of mystery and might,
whose wonderful works are to be remembered and praised,
move in our lives, change our minds, soften our hearts, direct our feet,
that we may follow you more faithfully.
Yes, Lord, we seek to follow Jesus,
in whose name we pray. Amen.**

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song

Refrain — “The Steadfast Love of the Lord”

by Edith McNeill

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; God's mercies never come to an end.
They are new every morning, new every morning; great is your faithfulness, O Lord,
great is your faithfulness.

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Reading — Exodus 3:1-15

Moses experienced the call of God when God appeared to him in a bush that burned but was not consumed. When Moses expressed his unworthiness, God promised to be with him. When Moses objected that people would demand to know God's name, God revealed the divine name, Yahweh (I AM WHO I AM), or the LORD. Israel discovered God's true identity when God took them out of Egypt.

The refrain (“The Steadfast Love of the Lord” – text above) is repeated.

RESPONSE

We begin our lives of responding to the gospel in prayer and offering

Hymn — “Guide My Feet”

GUIDE MY FEET

Guide my feet while I run this race; (yes, my Lord!)
guide my feet while I run this race; (yes, my Lord!)
Guide my feet while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain! (race in vain!)

Hold my hand... Stand by me... I'm your child... *et cetera, ad libitum*

The Blessing of the Backpacks

for students of all ages and levels

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNAL BLESSING

One: O God, bless these backpacks.
Make them strong for their job
of helping our students to learn.
May their straps never break,
Their padding never give out,
Their zippers never jam.
May they never be forgotten in strange places,
May the burdens in them be light.

Many: **And—moreover—make the bodies and lives that bear them strong,
and growing, and whole,
and blessed, ever blessed,
by your love.**

One: In the name of the great Teacher, at whose knee we all are taught to pray:

Many: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our *debts*, as we forgive *our debtors*; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and glory forever. Amen.**

Responding with our Gifts

Give online: Go to www.storrscongchurch.org and click the green “Give now...” button.

Text: Text “StorrsCongChurch” to 73256, followed by your gift amount (i.e. “StorrsCongChurch \$100”) to access online giving via text message.

Those participating via Zoom are welcome to submit prayer petitions (joys and concerns) during this time via the Chat feature in Zoom.

An Offering Thought

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. – Romans 12:21

The future church must be a beacon of good, casting a true vision of hope, love, justice, and mercy as we commit to follow Jesus into a new way of being and living. Today’s gospel lesson reminds us that we must lose our life to find it in Jesus (Matthew 15:21-28). What do you and your faith community need to do to become that beacon in an uncertain world?

OFFERTORY MUSIC — “All Creatures of Our God and King,” arr. Ryan

Adult Handbells

The Prayers of the People

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us forth in mission for the world

Hymn — “I, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Here I Am, Lord)”

HERE I AM, LORD

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.

All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.

I, who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.

Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

REFRAIN: Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.

I have wept for love of them. They turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.

I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send? *Refrain.*

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.

I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.

Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied.

I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send? *Refrain.*

Benediction

Many thanks to Andy McCabe for assisting with sound and video tech today!

*Many thanks to our Adult Handbells
and to SCC Choral Scholars Sarah Marze & Jonah Garcia for their musical leadership!*

Following worship, the Zoom Meeting will remain open for those who wish to connect and chat—a bring-your-own-coffee “coffee hour”! We look forward to connecting with you!

Artist reflection on today’s cover art:

“In this piece, I imagine the leaves and flames of the burning bush image God’s words for Moses. I have depicted God’s message through symbols and imagery that start in the center and radiate out. The words in bold point to particular details I have rendered. I invite you to look for the ways God’s words might be translated visually: **God’s eyes have seen the misery of God’s people. The Israelites have cried out in the midst of their oppression, and God knows their suffering. God’s hope is for Moses to bring the Israelites to a land flowing with milk and honey, and Moses will know it is God who called him when they are out of Egypt they shall worship God on this mountain** (Ex 3:7-12).”

— Lauren Wright Pittman

Notes and Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements:

- Call to Worship by the Rev. MaryAnn R. Rennie for the Church of Scotland’s *Starters for Sunday* website; reprinted on *re:Worship: Scripturally-based resources for worship planners and leaders*, <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/08/call-to-worship-exodus-3-1-15.html>
- Hymn – “Be Thou My Vision”: Text from Irish poem; trans. Mary E. Byrne, 1905; vers. Eleanor Hull, 1912; alt. Music from Irish ballad; harm. David Evans, 1927; harm. ©1927 Oxford University Press; all rights reserved; reproduced under OneLicense.net #A-719182. Sourced from *Glory to God: Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs*, ©2013 Westminster John Knox Press, #450.
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- Offering Thought from Rob Blezard, *Stewardship Snippets*, Stewardship of Life Institute.
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A Note on Giving: We welcome and encourage your financial generosity in support of the Storrs Congregational Church UCC and our mission to share in God's love by growing in faith, courageously seeking justice, and generously caring for all people! Your giving back to God and God's mission through the life of this church is a part of your gratitude towards God and your faithful stewardship of all that God has entrusted to you. There are a number of ways you can make a financial contribution:

- **Mail:** You can mail your check or money order to us at the church office:
Storrs Congregational Church UCC, 2 North Eagleville Rd., Storrs Mansfield, CT 06268.
- **Drop-off:** You can drop off cash, checks, or money orders at the church office during the week.
- **Online Bill Pay:** Most banks and credit unions offer an "online bill pay" in their online account access. All you need to do is set up the church as another payee in that system, and your bank or credit union will take care of printing a check and mailing it to us—you don't even need to find a stamp! There is no cost, either to you or to the church, for using this option! You can even set up your contribution as an automatic/recurring payment, so that your generosity keeps flowing always.
- **Online or text via ACH debit from a checking or savings account:** By using our website giving portal (go to www.storrscongchurch.org and click the green "Give now..." button), you can make an auto-debit from your checking or savings account. (Note that we are assessed a small processing fee, 1% of the contribution, plus 35¢ per transaction. You will be given the option—and it is optional—when you make your contribution to add a small amount to offset the 1% processing fee.)
- **Online or text via Debit Card or Credit Card:** By using our website giving portal (go to www.storrscongchurch.org and click the green "Give now..." button), you can charge your contribution to a debit card or credit card. (Note that we are assessed a small processing fee, 3% of the contribution, plus 35¢ per transaction. You will be given the option—and it is optional—when you make your contribution to add a small amount to offset the 3% processing fee.) Please note, if using a *credit* card: we as a church do *not* want you to add to any debt load in order for you to contribute, as that's not good stewardship for any of us! If using a *credit* card, please make sure for your own sake that it is a card for which you pay off the balance each month.

If you have any questions about how to make a contribution, or about your giving history, feel free to contact our Collector, Donna Latincsics (contact info available through the church office).

We envision our community as a welcoming, historic, and progressive Christian community. We are an Open and Affirming congregation: Believing that each of us is unique and blessed with special talents from God, each a creation of God's love, alike and yet different, we open our doors and our ministry to *all*. We accept into full participation in the life of this Church: people of any age, economic status, gender, marital status, race, sexual orientation, and physical, emotional and mental capability. As a community, we will work to put aside all prejudices and to affirm and promote the worth and dignity of each person.

STORRS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*We share in God's love by growing in faith,
courageously seeking justice, and generously caring for all people.*

<i>Ministers</i>	All of the Congregation
<i>Senior Minister</i>	Rev. Matthew C. Emery – matt@storrscongchurch.org Ext. 23
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