

Greetings to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home,

This Sunday is the Third Sunday of Easter. Today's Gospel passage is one of the accounts of the risen Jesus appearing to his disciples. Once again, Jesus challenges us to reconsider what we are convinced is an absolute.

A Special Meeting of the congregation has been called to consider the Shared Pastor Agreement proposal and vote on a motion to accept it. Please remember only members of the church have voice and vote at the Special Meeting. This meeting will be called to order at 10 AM.

Time to open the church? After more than a year, the church leadership is working on plans to re-open the church for in person worship. This a great moment for our congregation. In order to safely worship together there will be a number of changes to our Sunday morning. Stay tuned for all the details you will need to know as we celebrate together our first Sunday morning in church since March 8, 2020.

Looking forward to a wonderful Spring!

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Sunday Worship April 18, 2021

Good Morning to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home. This Sunday is the Third Sunday of Easter. Today's Gospel passage is one of the accounts of the risen Jesus appearing to his disciples. Once again, Jesus challenges us to reconsider what we are convinced is absolute.

Prayer Requests: We are accepting requests for prayer (healing, comfort, thanksgiving, and others). Please send your requests to the Pastor at pastor01089@gmail.com. Requests will then be sent out through our email list to the congregation for our common prayer life during the week. PLEASE remember that all prayer requests received become public knowledge. If you are uncertain if your request for another might be confidential, do not send it.

And now let us be in worship

Call to Worship (Responsive, L=Leader, P=People)

L May God open our hearts to hear God's Word.

P May God open our hearts to praise God's name.

L May God open our hearts to be in worship.

Unison Morning Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

We praise your name, O God, as we hear your word for us this day. We imagine a world where all come into your healing presence. We imagine a world where there is a deep respect for all people. We imagine a world where all creation is considered sacred. We imagine a world free from hatred. We imagine a world full of your peace. Help us to live your word, that this vision may be fulfilled for the sake of Christ who taught us to pray saying...*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Our prayers today focus on our call to be people of faith and disciples of Christ. There is time for personal prayer and meditation. This prayer is based on a prayer written by Professor Walter Brueggemann, Old Testament Scholar.

You, O God, have called the worlds into being, separated the light from the darkness, the sea from the dry land, You, O God, have called forth a living creation of rich and wonderful diversity and then, you O God created us in your own image, setting before us the ways of life and the ways of death. You, O God, have called forth your prophets, your people, your Christ and his disciples. It is you who wills, who summons, who beckons and who tugs at our sleeves. We believe you call us, each and every one of us and we are a strange lot; called but cowardly, obedient but self-indulgent, devoted to you, but otherwise preoccupied, we are a mixture of passionately answering your call and reluctant to bring everything that we are to our calling. Through your desire alone, you bring us into transformative moments. It is in those moments that you offer a new perspective, an openness of heart, a depth of thought that broadens our faith. In these instances, you introduce us to our true selves, the people that you intend us to be. In these experiences we meet those who already know you, have already discovered the wideness of your mercy, felt your love excelling, and now bring your vision to all who desire to see it. It is you, O God, who came to us in the fragile incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth that we might be made whole even in the midst of our imperfections. It is you, O God, to whom we pray, offering praise and giving thanks for every blessing. It is you, O God, to whom we bring our concerns, our anxieties, our frustrations, and our anger. And it is to you, O God, that we pray the prayers of intercession, our wishes for your presence and your touch in other people's lives as we now come in prayer and meditation. (personal prayer and meditation time)

It is you, O God, who desires, an openness of heart, a wideness of thought and a depth to our faith, introducing us to our true selves, the people that you intend us to be. Amen

Gospel Lesson: Luke 24:36-49

While all four Gospels record the Easter event of Christ's resurrection they do not always agree on the stories of Jesus' appearance to the disciples. The Gospel of Luke, for instance, is the only book that contains the story commonly referred to as the road to Emmaus. It is here that two disciples, walking to Emmaus, meet the risen Christ. At the end of their journey, they share a meal with him, and return to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples. Today's text picks up this narrative after these two disciples have returned to Jerusalem and told their story to the others.

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While, in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so, stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

After the reading, you may reflect on this passage.

The sermon for this text may be seen in this week's video.

Sermon: *An Open Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste*

Benediction:

Handley C.G. Moule, 1841-1920

The blessing of the Lord rest and remain upon all his people,
in every land and of every tongue.

The Lord meet in mercy all who seek him;

The Lord comfort all who suffer and mourn;
The Lord hasten his coming, and give us,
His people, Peace.
By all means.