

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

Today is the sixth Sunday of Easter! It is also Mother's Day on the national calendar. This Sunday we celebrate those who have been instrumental in our lives and loving us by offering the encouragement and support we needed to discern our path in life. Our text for today tells the story of one person's guide to a deeper understanding of the faith.

If all goes according to the plan, this will be our final Sunday Morning YouTube worship video. We are grateful to all those who helped produce our videos; our readers, candle lighters in Advent, musicians, decorators for the altar, proof-readers, editors and our camera and sound crew of two. And now it is time to

Open the church! May 16 will be our first in person worship service since we closed a year ago last March. There are specific safety details that will be sent to you. They do include making a reservation since our seating is limited by state mandate, wearing a mask, and keeping distance while entering and leaving the building. For the moment, we will not be singing in service, so pray mightily instead. Our hope is that these safety precautions will become unnecessary in the near future.

Looking forward to seeing you in worship!

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Sunday Worship May 9, 2021

Good Morning to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home. This Sunday we celebrate those who have been instrumental in our lives by loving us while offering us the encouragement and support we needed to discern our path in life. Our text for today tells the story of one person's guide to a deeper understanding of the faith.

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 From the ends of the earth, God calls us together.

P The rich and the poor, the joyful, those filled with sorrow, the loved and the unloved.

L All are gathered in the one household of God's love. Let us praise the Lord.

Unison Morning Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

Loving God, as a mother gives life and nourishment to her children, so you give life and nourishment to your people. As a mother teaches her children by her word and example, so you teach us by your Word and by the example of your Christ. As a mother walks with her children and guides them as they grow, so you walk with us, O God, and guide us on life's journey. As

we give thanks for those who have loved us and raised us, so do we give thanks to you, O God, and always in the name of Christ who taught 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 this morning, in honor of Mother's Day, focus on the blessings of those who raise us and raise us up. Let us be in prayer.

God of Grace and God of Glory, giver of life, sanctifier of the home, this day we are grateful for those you have chosen for us, who have shared their gifts and talents with us as we have moved through the pilgrimage of our lives. For parents, mothers and fathers, grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, and uncles, any and all who have cared for us, made a home for us, taught us by their word and example, and sacrificed on our behalf we offer this prayer of thanksgiving. For these guides of life, we are most grateful. We ask for your blessing upon them, increasing their joy in your calling to raise us and raise us up. In the long tradition of holy parents, of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Joseph and Mary, may those who have been holy parents to us be blessed by your faithful love. For all teachers, guides, and mentors, who have been like parents to us, we are grateful. For those who shared their wisdom, their love, and their care in specific moments in our lives when we most needed a guiding hand, a calm and reassuring voice, a shoulder to cry upon and strong arms to hold onto, we ask for your blessing upon them. Increase in them the joy they already know for being among your givers of care. God of Grace and God of Glory, we too are called to be parents, grandparents, great grandparents, aunts and uncles, family members. We too are called to be teachers, guides and mentors. We too are called to offer your love and your care to those who need assurance, who seek direction, who wander lost and lone and who look to us for the words of kindness, for a deeper understanding of the faith, and for a prayer on their behalf. Help us, God of Grace, and God of Glory, shower your spirit upon us that we may be holy parents, teachers, wise guides, and loving mentors to those in our families and in your wider and expansive community. Give us patience, give us wisdom, bend our pride to your will and your way, that this day and every day, we may bring your light and your love to those around us. Even as we pray for ourselves, we lift up to you those whom we know and love and those known only unto you who are in need this day. (personal prayer and meditation.) Gracious God, who loves us and all the rest, we know that all things are possible with you, even to bring our love beyond the places it is usually kept, we offer this prayer in the name of Christ. Amen.

Scripture Lesson: Acts 8:26-40

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is a continuation of the Gospel according to Luke. The author of that Gospel moves from the story of Jesus of Nazareth to the narrative of the Christian

movement from the resurrection of Christ to the time period when the apostle Paul was in Rome preaching. The first half of the book tells the story of the birth of the church and includes stories about some of the disciples. The second half is dominated by Paul's mission to the gentiles. In this morning's portion, the main character is Philip, not to be confused with the disciple Philip. This Philip has earned the title, "The Evangelist." He was one of the seven original Deacons chosen by the disciples.

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So, he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So, Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

After the reading, you may reflect on this passage.

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

Sermon: *The Guides of Life*

Benediction: Colossians 3:15-17

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God.