

AUGUST 30, 2026
14TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



St. John United Church of Christ

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Rev. Rosemary Captain

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Liturgy – Rev. Lavon Bayler

Ushers –

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

*Please stand if comfortably able.

Respond with words in bold print.

Bible translation – CEB Common English Bible

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

THE BELL IS RUNG:

PRELUDE: “To God Be the Glory” Andrae Crouch

PENNIES FOR MISSION: Our Churches Wider Mission

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

ONE: Why have we gathered on this holy day? What has drawn us to this time and place?

MANY: We have been drawn to a flame burning here. We sense the glory of God in this place.

ONE: God calls us to this time of worship. The place where we are standing is holy ground.

MANY: Give thanks to God: sing praises. Give attention to the voice of God.

ONE: Out of a burning bush, God spoke to Moses. In the rhythms of worship, God speaks to us.

MANY: We will listen for God’s message to us. Surely God’s strength will supply our needs.

***INVOCATION:** We tremble to think that the Source of all life, the Creator of all worlds, is in this place, observing our worship, knowing our innermost secrets, calling us by name. O God, we dare to call on you, to bow before you, to welcome your Word. We tremble to think what you might expect of us, for we remember what you expected of Moses. You sent him against the rulers of his people to win release from oppression. You

sent him from the comfortable places he knew to plead for freedom amid threatening conditions. We dare to worship you, O God, knowing that you expect much of us. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN: 73 “Enter, Rejoice, and Come In”**

***CALL TO CONFESSION:**

So often we are complainers, not seekers. We proclaim our innocence and justify our anger when so much in life does not go the way we had hoped. We blame God for conditions entrusted to our stewardship. We become stumbling blocks, not facilitators, of God’s design. Let us seek reconciliation with our God.

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

O God, we have wavered in our faith in the midst of suffering, and we have not persevered in prayer. We have claimed to be wiser than we are, and have even tried to correct you. We make excuses for ourselves rather than listening for your direction and heeding your call. Our days are so filled with the busyness of this world that we cannot see your reign among us. We are so weighed down by our own concerns that we have no energy to serve in your realm. Send your cleansing fire among us, forgiving God. Amen

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:**

God is ever willing to grant us forgiveness, but we cannot receive it if we are unwilling to be changed by it. As long as we focus on preserving our own lives, protecting our advantages, we will be lost. If we want to be Christ’s followers, we will deny ourselves and take up the cross, not as a burden, but as the joyous symbol of loving and giving for all the right reasons. We will overcome evil with good. Thanks be to God!

***GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat twice)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

OLD TESTAMENT: Exodus 3:1-15

Moses at the burning bush

3 Moses was taking care of the flock for his father-in-law Jethro, Midian’s priest. He led his flock out to the edge of the desert, and he came to God’s mountain called Horeb. ²The Lord’s messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn’t burn up. ³Then Moses

said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't burning up.

⁴ When the Lord saw that he was coming to look, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

Moses said, "I'm here."

⁵ Then the Lord said, "Don't come any closer! Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground." ⁶ He continued, "I am the God of your father, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the Lord said, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. ⁸ I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites all live. ⁹ Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. ¹⁰ So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

¹² God said, "I'll be with you. And this will show you that I'm the one who sent you. After you bring the people out

of Egypt, you will come back here and worship God on this mountain."

God's special name

¹³ But Moses said to God, "If I now come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they are going to ask me, 'What's this God's name?' What am I supposed to say to them?"

¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am. ^[b] So say to the Israelites, 'I Am has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God continued, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever; this is how all generations will remember me.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c

Page 691

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 12:9-21

⁹ Love should be shown without pretending. Hate evil, and hold on to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. ¹¹ Don't hesitate to be enthusiastic—be on fire in the Spirit as you serve the Lord! ¹² Be happy in your hope, stand your ground when you're in trouble, and devote yourselves to prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of God's people, and welcome strangers into your home. ¹⁴ Bless people who harass you—bless and don't

curse them. ¹⁵ Be happy with those who are happy, and cry with those who are crying. ¹⁶ Consider everyone as equal, and don't think that you're better than anyone else. Instead, associate with people who have no status. Don't think that you're so smart. ¹⁷ Don't pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions, but show respect for what everyone else believes is good.

¹⁸ If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people. ¹⁹ Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, *Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back, says the Lord.* ²⁰ Instead, *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head.* ²¹ Don't be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good.

***GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 16:21-28**

First prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and legal experts, and that he had to be killed and raised on the third day. ²² Then Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him: "God forbid, Lord! This won't happen to you." ²³ But he turned to Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are a stone that could make me stumble, for you are not thinking God's thoughts but human thoughts."

Saving and losing life

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. ²⁵ All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will find them. ²⁶ Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? What will people give in exchange for their lives? ²⁷ For the Human One is about to come with the majesty of his Father with his angels. And then he will repay each one for what that person has done. ²⁸ I assure you that some standing here won't die before they see the Human One coming in his kingdom."

MESSAGE: "What's a Messiah?"

Last Sunday, Jesus took the disciples 25 miles north into a region that was not Jewish. Jesus wanted more time with the twelve somewhere he could teach them without crowds being around. Jesus had a lot more to teach them and time was running out. Jesus wasn't sure any of these men really understood who he was and what he was trying to do. Fortunately,

Peter had the correct answer when Jesus asked them who they thought he was. "You are the Messiah." UNFORTUNATELY, the men really didn't know what a Messiah was.

These Jewish men only know what they had heard about "a Messiah" ever since they were born. The

Messiah was a warrior who would rescue all Jesus people from Rome and whomever else wanted to oppress them. So some of their ideas were not really their fault. It's all they knew.

We were all taught that Christopher Columbus discovered America. Evidently that's not exactly true. Other explorers were there before him, plus America was not a land of no other people. The Native Americans had been on this land for many years before the white man came to "conquer" them. They really didn't need conquering but that's another story.

Getting back to Mr. Columbus, all our lives that all we knew. Now we are hearing we were taught all wrong. That's kind of upsetting, don't you think? That's what is happening for the disciples.

Although the disciples had grasped the fact that Jesus was God's Messiah, they still had not grasped what that great fact meant. **THAT'S WHY IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THEM NOT TO TELL ANYONE ABOUT JESUS BEING THE MESSIAH.** If they had, they would have created a mess and there probably would have been a tragic rebellion.

Have you heard the saying, "a little bit of truth is more dangerous than knowing the whole truth." Jesus needed more time to explain to these 12 men what had to happen before peace truly came to Galilee and down to Jerusalem. Jesus told them he would be arrested,

betrayed, beaten, and crucified. You can imagine what they thought of that news. They just figured out who he was and now he is going to be murdered. And this was supposed to be GOOD NEWS??

Peter was ready to protect Jesus and guard him against all those who would hurt him. However, Jesus was not looking for a bodyguard. He stopped Peter by saying, "Get behind me, Satan!!"

The word "Satan" literally means "adversary" and that is why Peter's ideas were not God's but all too human. Satan is any force which seeks to deflect us from the way of God; (remember at lent we talked about what is sin, and we defined sin as anything that takes us away from God.) Here's a few more definitions of Satan.

Satan is any influence which seeks to make us turn back from the hard way that God has set before us; Satan is any power which seeks to make human desires take the place of the divine imperative.

What might come to our minds is the first time Jesus was tempted by Satan. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptizer and he went into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. While Jesus was in the wilderness he was visited by Satan who tried to tempt Jesus into accepting a better, easier life, as opposed to what Jesus was to face now. Jesus rebuked Satan then, as he does now.

One more thought I want to mention before I end. This comes from Rev. William Barclay in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew.

“What made this temptation more acute was the fact that it came from one who loved him. Peter spoke as he did only because he loved Jesus so much that he could not bear to think of him treading that dreadful path and dying that awful death. When we think about it, the hardest temptation of all is the one which comes from protecting love. There are times when fond love seeks to deflect us from the perils of the path of God: but the real love is not the love which holds people at home, but the love which sends them out to obey the Commandments of moral courage and conviction which are given not to make life easy, but to make life great. It is quite possible for love to be so protecting that it seeks to protect those it loves from the adventure and the challenge of committed followers of Christ, and from the strenuousness of the pathway of the pilgrim of God.

“What really wounded Jesus’ heart, and what really made him speak as he did to Peter, was that the tempter spoke to him that day through the fond but mistaken love of Peter’s burning and impetuous heart.”

Do you agree? Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC: “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” Video

PASTORAL PRAYER:

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

PRAYER RESPONSE: 775

**And God will raise you up on eagle’s wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of God’s hand.**

OFFERTORY INVITATION: God invites us to observe the misery of our sisters and brothers who live in oppression and poverty. We have the resources to help make a difference in their lives. Beyond the limits of charity, we are challenged to invest our lives for the mutual benefit of all God’s children. Let us give as God as blessed us, with joy.

OFFERTORY: “More Like the Master” John M. Rasley

***DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

***UNISON OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

May our offerings be an expression of genuine love that reflects your love for us, O God. We seek to honor you as we serve one another in Christ's name. We reach out to overcome evil with good. Direct our use of the resources you entrust to us that we may not only contribute to the needs of the saints but also devote our lives to the building of a peaceable worldwide community in which all are valued. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: 454 "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian"**

***RESPONSIVE COMMISSION AND BLESSING:**

Seek every day the presence we have known here. God offers strength for every challenge we face.

We will give thanks and call on God's name. We will open our eyes to see God's daily miracles.

God promises life in all its fullness, not earthly riches. Life is fruitful when lived for others.

With mutual affection, we honor one another. With hope and joy, we reach out helping hands.

Let worship continue as we pray for one another. May God's will be done as we overcome evil with good.

Praise God for all wonders of this life.

Praise God for opportunities to serve in Christ's name.
Amen. Amen.

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE: 571**

O God of Love, O God of Peace
Make wars throughout the world to cease.
The wrath of human wrong restrain;
Give peace, O God, give peace again.

THE BELL IS RUNG:

POSTLUDE: "Majestic March" Rob Roy Perry

PRAYER LIST: Becky Ballard, Russ Hartmann, Marilyn Paul, Mary Lou and Urban Baum, Pam and Syd Safriet, Yvonne Weber, Jackie Canterbury, Wayne Huss, our Beloved Country.