

We Are a Nurturing Beloved Community...

July 20, 2025



Vision Statement:

We Are a Nurturing, Beloved Community.
We Are Growing Authentic Christian Faith.
We Are Living Christ-Inspired Action.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
July 20, 2025 10:00 am

In choosing love, we are co-creating the kind of universe we want. ~ Liuan Huska

Maybe one day we'll be less surprised that we can't be all we need. ~ Mandy Smith

*So when I say "right relationship," it is shorthand for relationships that are authentic, organic, healthy, present, healing, nourishing, well-boundaried, interdependent, and just.
~ adrienne maree brown*

PRELUDE

Judy Widrig

WELCOME

Sharon Benton

*We love children in worship—their noises and wiggles are welcome, too. There are pillows and a coloring, book, and play area in the front and in the corner near the windows.
Younger kids may enjoy the Narthex play area. Their movements back and forth
are a joy for us as they participate fully.*

RINGING THE BELL

*Rise in body or spirit

WE ARE A NURTURING, BELOVED COMMUNITY

WELCOME SONG

"God Welcomes All"

AMEN THEMBA

Energetically

God wel - comes all, strang - ers and friends;
God's love is strong and it ne - ver ends.

The musical score is written for a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in 4/4 time, key of D major. The melody is simple and repetitive, using whole and half notes. The lyrics are: "God welcomes all, strangers and friends; God's love is strong and it never ends." The score is arranged in two systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line.

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THE STORY

Sharon Benton

TIME WITH CHILDREN

*After Time with Children, children may remain on the pillows, sit with their adults,
or use the coloring tables in the front or by the windows.*

*HYMN 388 (black hymnal)

"Help Us Accept Each Other"

AURELIA

COMMUNITY PRAYER

by Teresa of Calcutta, alt.

Nancy Fayram

One Voice: God of nurturing, beloved community,
you have taught us in so many ways:

**All Voices: Love cannot remain by itself—it has no meaning.
Love has to be put into action, and that action is service.
Whatever form we are,
whatever our abilities,
whatever our resources,
it is not how much we do,
but how much love we put into doing;
a lifelong sharing of love with others**

One Voice: With all that we are this day:

All Voices: Amen.

SUNG INVITATION TO PRAYER*“As Colors in the Sky”**(after the prayers, hum 1x through)*

Unison



3 Cre - at - ing God, you dance, you move as one in three. Come
show us, by your rain-bow light, our shared hu - man - i - ty. The
heav - ens and the earth are made new ev - ery day, help
us dis - cov - er by your grace, new truth, new life, new ways.

The musical notation is a single staff in 4/4 time, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is simple and repetitive, with a consistent rhythm of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the staff, aligned with the notes. The word 'Unison' is written above the first staff.

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Sharon Benton

The Prayer of Jesus

We invite you to use the language for God that is most comfortable for you:

"Our Creator," "Our Father" or "Our Mother."

Our Creator
 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 and ever. Amen.

*If you have a prayer request you'd like to share confidentially with our pastors,
 have added to the confidential prayer list, or spoken aloud in worship,
go to www.fccb.net/contact-us/ to send a message or call the church to talk with a pastor.*

WE ARE GROWING AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN FAITH.

A READING FROM SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 4:7-12
Common English Bible

Nancy Fayram

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

Nancy Fayram

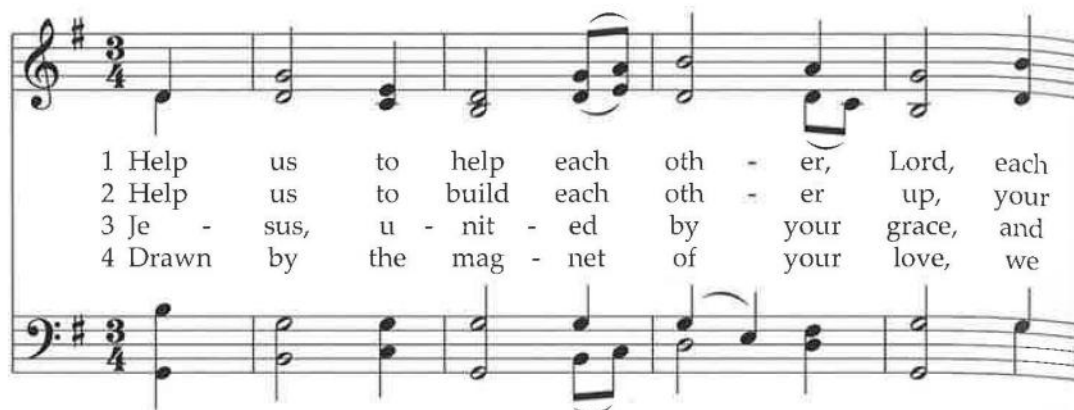
One: For the Word of God in scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us:

All: Thanks be to God.

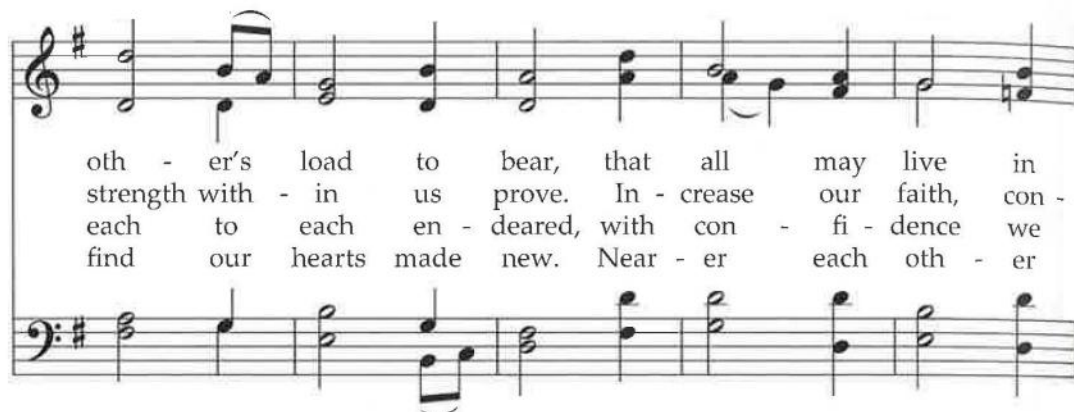
SERMON

We Are a Nurturing Beloved Community...
First Congregational Church Vision Statement sermon series, part 1 of 3

Sharon Benton



1 Help us to help each oth - er, Lord, each
 2 Help us to build each oth - er up, your
 3 Je - sus, u - nit - ed by your grace, and
 4 Drawn by the mag - net of your love, we



oth - er's load to bear, that all may live in
 strength with - in us prove. In - crease our faith, con -
 each to each en - deared, with con - fi - dence we
 find our hearts made new. Near - er each oth - er



true ac - cord, our joys and pains to share.
 firm our hope and fill us with your love.
 seek your face and know our prayer is heard.
 let us move, and near - er still to you.

Text: Charles Wesley (England), *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1742, alt.; stanzas 1, 2, and 4 rev. in *Hymns for Today's Church*, 1982,
 © 1982 Jubilate Group (admin. Hope Publishing Co.)

Music: Hugh Wilson (Scotland); adapt. Robert A. Smith (Scotland), *Sacred Music*, 1825 Used under OneLicense.net #A-718199

WE ARE LIVING CHRIST-INSPIRED ACTION.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & OFFERING

You may make an offering either in the plates or online.

*Your generosity allows the work of this place nurture beloved community,
grow authentic Christian faith, and live Christ-inspired action. Thank you!*

There are several ways to give: 1) Give at our website, <https://fccb.net/giving/>.

2) Mail checks to First Congregational Church, 2401 Cornwall Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225.

3) Use the Breeze app. Download from your app store, set up an account, and give!

4) Give by text. Text a dollar amount to (360) 205-1297, and set up your account.

5) Scan the QR code on the back cover of the bulletin.

MUSICAL OFFERING

*"God Is Still Speaking"
by David Fayram*

David Fayram

REFRAIN

*God is still speaking
God is still speaking
God is still speaking to me
I know it's true
God's speaking to you
And holding us all faithfully*

*We have climbed the mountain together
We've sailed on stormy seas
Even in unwelcome weather
God's voice soothes like a breeze*

Refrain

*I have waited and waited for something
And suffered the pain of my doubt
But God pulled me up from the mire
and put a fresh song in my mouth*

Refrain

*At times all of us have wondered
Out thoughts as tangled as weeds
God's voice comes not as the thunder
It's a still, small voice sets us free*

Refrain

*We see the rainbow colors
Spread out like a clarion call
We know that there are no "others"
God's voice is welcoming all*

Refrain last time

*The pilgrims started it – I'll bet you heard
Well we are here to spread the word
That folks can worship as they're inclined
So come on people and join the line ...
in the Congregational Conga*

*United churches throughout the land
Loving people, hand in hand
Don't have a doctrine, don't have a creed
You know their hearts by their deeds ...
in the Congregational Conga*

*From services to Sunday school
The congregation make the rules
Or so the pastors often claim
Now who does that leave us to blame? ...
for the Congregational Conga*

*Calvin set the path for a new set of rules
Now it's all being done by individuals
Experienced ... or beginners
All of us share as the saints and the sinners ...
in the Congregational Conga*

*Congre Congre Congregational
It's so ... celebrational
No matter how controversial
Let your spirit move to the inspiration
of the Congregational Conga*

*TV preachers sell their tapes
Anglicans kneel until it aches
Evangelists shout "amen"
Here we go, it's time again -- ... sing it --
Congregational Conga*

*The Baptists play in the water
Fundamentalists do as they oughta
Romans live by papal decrees
Congregationals do as they please ...
in the Congregational Conga*

*We work together -- now is the time
Boards & committees for a Conga line
Kick to the left and kick to the right
Or Pastor Sharon will preach all night ...
'bout the Congregational Conga*

*Congre Congre Congregational
It's so ... celebrational
What a weird denomination
That asks for your participation
in the Congregational Conga*

*However long you've been in this church
The boards are always on a people search
In the UCC it's never too late
To grab a friend and participate ...
in the Congregational Conga*

*Our church is going through a mighty change
As Boards and Committees are rearranged
Sharon said I couldn't rhyme with restructure
But change is part of our general culture ...
in our Congregational Conga*

*Congre Congre Congregational
It's so ... inspirational
Here it is, a NEW ADVENTURE
So everyone say it all together
it's a Congregational Conga*

*Congre Congre Congregational
It's so ... invitational
Now I say this song is concluded
Get it together ... be included
in the Congregational Conga*

***BENEDICTION & PASSING THE PEACE**

Sharon Benton

POSTLUDE

Judy Widrig

ROOM FOR REFLECTIONS



Cover Image: *At the Impulse of God's Love: A Re-envisioning of Dirk Willems Saving His Captor's Life* (1685) by Jan Luykens © 2018 Michelle L Hofer

Artist's Statement: No other illustration from Thieleman J. van Braght's volume, *Martyrs Mirror*, has so inspired generations of Anabaptists to respond with love in the face of persecution and violence. In a swift and sacrificial act, escaping Anabaptist prisoner, Dirk Willems, turns around to save his pursuer's life, reaching to pull him from the chilly water having broken through the ice. The presence of God's Spirit and love in this radical effort is visually represented by dot work surrounding and flowing between the outstretched hands — a technique influenced by medieval Celtic gospel illuminators' use of red dots to enliven the Word. Additional hands in the piece serve as a chorus allowing viewers the opportunity to enter into this moving witness of divine peace in action. May the people of God in unison sing, as was so aptly written by Frances Ridley Havergal in his hymn, *Take My Life and Let It Be* (1874): "Take my hands and let them move, at the impulse of God's love."

WE ARE
BETTER
TOGETHER



Open and Affirming (ONA): As an Open and Affirming congregation believing in a loving God, all people are welcome in this church without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, economic or social status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

We Try To Use Language which will help people feel included in our worship. Since not everyone is comfortable with the same language, we invite you to amend the words of the service as we sing and pray if they do not adequately express your faith. We invite you to assist us in creating new expressions of our common faith and life together.

Technical Support: If you need help streaming our worship services or connecting in other ways, please let us know.

APPOINTMENTS WITH PASTORAL STAFF

Our pastor is available by appointment virtually or in person. Contact her by email or call the pastoral care line, 360-733-4255.

Sharon **sharon@fccb.net**

Our Chaplain is also available at
chaplain@fccb.net.

Or you can email our Office Manager
Cydne at **office@fccb.net**
and she'll pass your message on.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH United Church of Christ

An Open & Affirming Congregation

2401 Cornwall Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225

Church Office: 360-734-3720

24/7 Emergency Pastoral Care: 360-733-4255

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Facebook: facebook.com/fccbucc

Office Hours:

9:30 am-4:30 pm, M-Th. 10:00 am-2:00 pm, F.

PASTOR: Sharon Benton, she/her

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY LIFE:

Scott Ward, he/him (scott@fccb.net)

CHAPLAIN: Charlene Epp, she/her

ORGANIST: Judy Widrig, she/her

INTERIM MUSIC COORDINATOR:

Dallas Geil, he/him (music@fccb.net)

CHURCH SCHOOL/YOUTH COORDINATOR

Maya McEachern

WORSHIP MEDIA COORDINATOR

Moxxy Rogers, she/her

OFFICE MANAGER: Cydne Cochran, she/her

CUSTODIAN/MAINTENANCE:

Kurt Aagard, he/him

BOOKKEEPER: Eric Bowen, he/him

MODERATOR: Diane Cooper-Schick, she/her

VICE MODERATOR: Jordan Sandoval

CLERK: Janet Malley, she/her

TREASURER: Craig Jennings

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