

Unraveled by Uncertainty

July 19, 2026



Vision Statement:

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

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
July 19, 2026 10:00 am

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few.
~ Shunryu Suzuki

*The more pressure we are under, the more urgency, uncertainty, and fear we face,
the stronger our instincts are to cling to the familiar.*
~ Andrea J. Ritchie

PRELUDE

Emilie Buhl

RINGING THE BELL

WE ARE A NURTURING, BELOVED COMMUNITY.

WELCOME SONG

"Restless Weaver"

BEACH SPRING



Rest-less Weav - er ev - er spin - ing threadsof jus - tice and sha - lom;
dreaming pat - terns of cre - a - tion whereall crea - tures find a home;
gathering up life's var - ied fi - bers ev - ery tex - ture, ev - ery hue:
whereEarth'sfrag - ile web is rav - eling, with us weave your world a - new.

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**Rise in body or spirit*

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 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.

THE STORY

Sharon Benton

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Cathy Belben

After Time with Children, children may go with Maya to church school in the social hall or remain in the sanctuary as they choose.

***HYMN 172** (black hymnal) “Jesus Calls Us, O’er the Tumult”
verses 1-4

GALILEE

COMMUNITY PRAYER

by Sarah Are, alt.

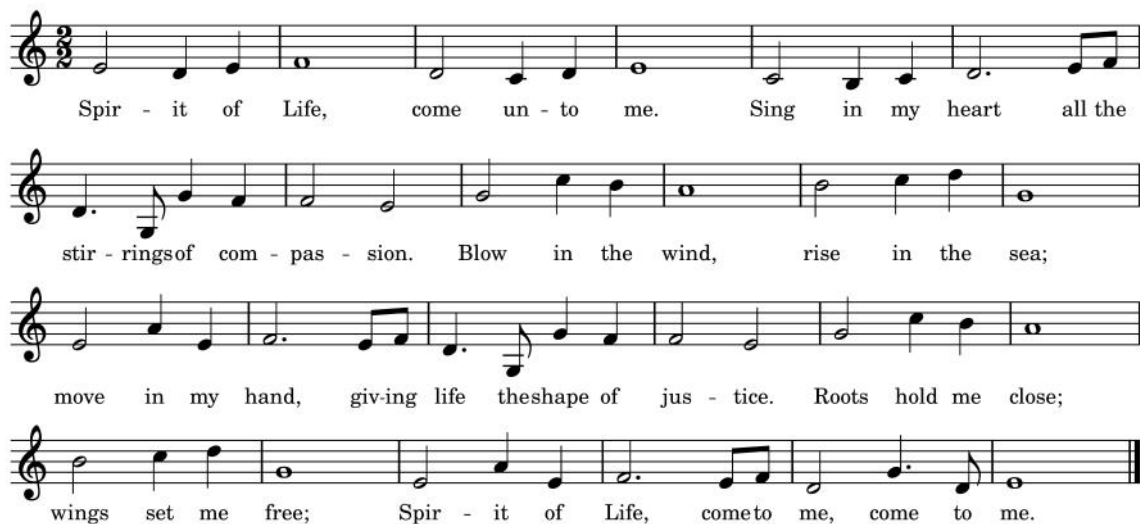
Sharon Benton

One Voice: Jesus invites us out into the waves with him—
let’s go together in prayer.

All Voices: **God of the wind and the sea,**
You invite us to be brave, but we are more familiar with fear.
You invite us to trust you, but we’d rather trust wind and gravity.
You invite us to believe in ourselves, but we have never been good at that.
You invite us to move—to change and take a risk—
But we stay planted where we are, afraid of the ways growth might hurt.
Forgive us for our self-doubt and fear.
We believe, despite our unbelief.
Amen.

SUNG PRAYER

"Spirit of Life"



Spir - it of Life, come un - to me. Sing in my heart all the
stir - rings of com - pas - sion. Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
move in my hand, giv - ing life the shape of jus - tice. Roots hold me close;
wings set me free; Spir - it of Life, come to me, come to me.

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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

Matthew 14:22-33
Common English Bible

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

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.

REFLECTION

“Unraveled by Uncertainty”

Sharon Benton

GIFT OF MUSIC

“Oceans” (Where Feet May Fail)
by Joel Houston, Matt Crocker, Salomon Ligthelm
Offered by Lucas Wagner, Amber Wagner, Jamie Elliott, and David Fayram

WE ARE LIVING CHRIST-INSPIRED ACTION.

TESTIMONY

Renee Thomas

ANNOUNCEMENTS & OFFERING

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

*Your generosity allows us together to 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

“Firm Foundation”

by Austin Davis, Chandler Moore, Cody Carnes

Offered by Lucas Wagner & Jamie Elliott

***HYMN 512** (red hymnal)

“Stand By Me”
verses 1-4

STAND BY ME

***BENEDICTION & PASSING THE PEACE**

Sharon Benton

POSTLUDE

Emilie Buhl



Cover Image “Step Into the Swell” (Peter Sinks in the Water) by Lisle Gwynn Garrity. Inspired by Matthew 14:22-33 | acrylic on canvas.

Artist Statement: *At the start of this chapter, John the Baptist is brutally beheaded. Jesus withdraws from the crowds to a deserted place, yet is followed by the masses —perhaps many of them former followers of John the Baptist.*

[He] retreats to a mountain by himself. Perhaps he needs space to grieve John and to grapple with the gravity of his calling. The crowds and demands of his ministry were surging; in the same way, the waves and the wind begin to batter the boat that had drifted far from shore. Yet, as dawn breaks, a mirage beckons to them, casting out words to buoy them up: “Do not fear.”

What I find in Peter’s response is not a challenge or a profession of doubt, but a willingness to step into the swell, like a trust fall into the unknown. Perhaps in seasons when our sense of certainty and security unravels, our desperation is more likely to convert into courage. Is there something about unraveling that makes us a bit less risk-averse, a bit more willing to try what we wouldn’t have dared when everything felt predictable and sure?

Imagine this same scene with no storm, no raging seas, no ghostly glimpse of Jesus skimming the surface. Would Peter have stepped in then? Would he have expanded his definition of what’s possible? Would he have experienced the divine so surprisingly, so surely? Would you step in?

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

Pastoral staff are available by appointment virtually or in person. Contact them by email or call the pastoral care line, 360-733-4255.

Sharon sharon@fccb.net
Charlene chaplain@fccb.net

You can also 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

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

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Facebook: facebook.com/fccbucc

Office Hours:

10:00 am-2:00 pm, M-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

MUSIC COORDINATOR:

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

CHURCH SCHOOL/

YOUTH COORDINATOR:

Maya McEachern, she/they

WORSHIP MEDIA COORDINATOR:

Moxxy Rogers, she/her

OFFICE MANAGER: Cydne Cochran, she/her

MODERATOR: Jordan Sandoval, she/they

VICE MODERATOR: Kate Destler

PAST MODERATOR:

Diane Cooper-Schick, she/her

CLERK: Leigh Hjelmseth

TREASURER: Darlene Mathias

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