FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SAN RAFAEL
July 26, 2026 10 am



Welcome to worship!
We are delighted that you chose to worship with us this morning. We hope you find a warm spirit of hospitality and a worship experience that strengthens your faith and discipleship. You are invited to stand, as you are able, when you see an * in the bulletin.

Centering Thought

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live." *Deuteronomy 30:19*

Centering Bell *On hearing the bell, settle into a time of centering silence and listening to the Prelude with an open heart.*

Prelude

Welcome/Opening Words (A special welcome if you are joining us online)
Liturgist: "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey..."
Congregation: "You are welcome here."
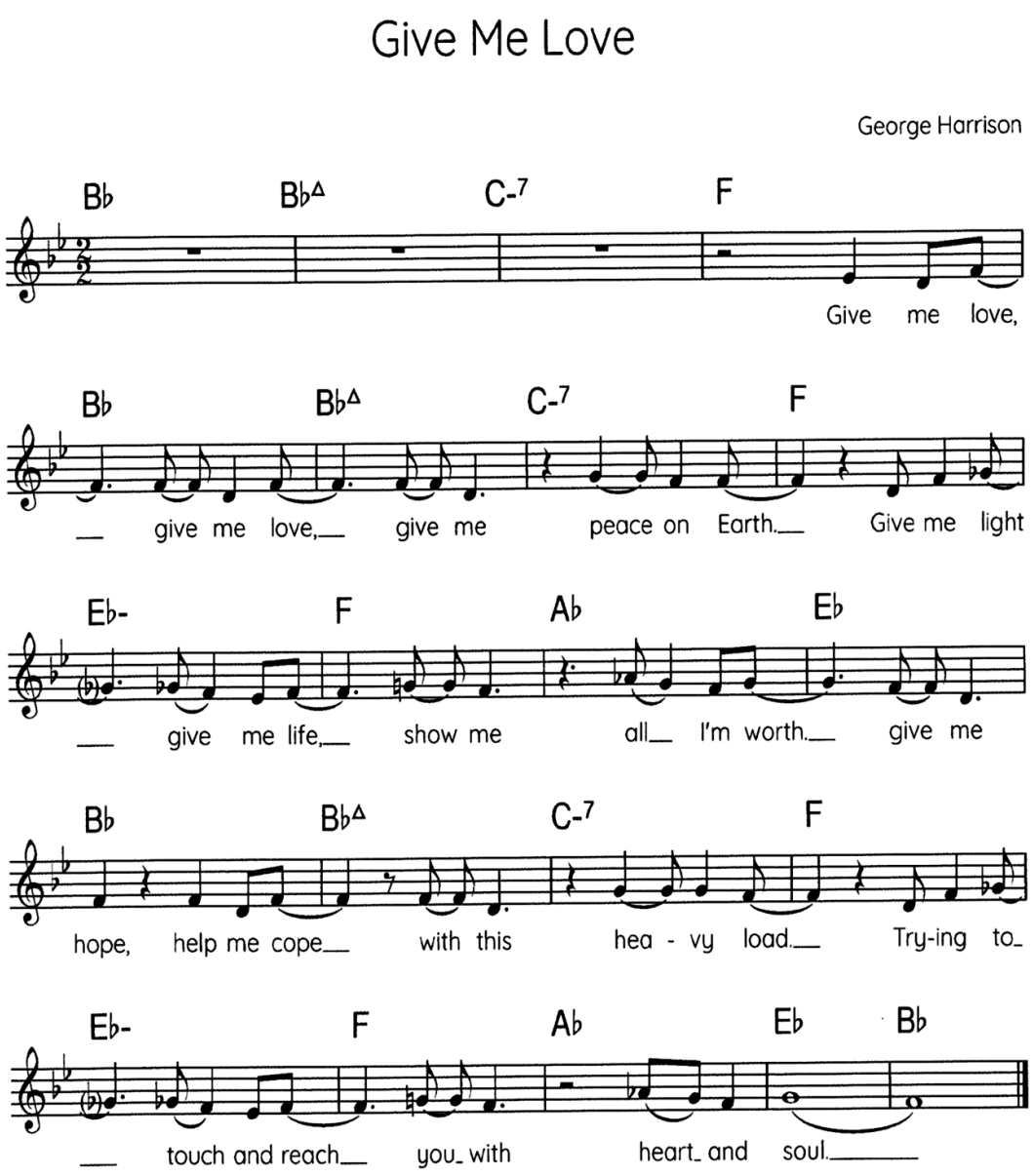
***Opening Litany**
One: Let us come together rejoicing. For nothing can separate us from the love of God.
All: Not life nor death.
Not prejudice nor power.
Not our grief nor our fears.
One: Not the wrongs we have done, nor the wrongs done against us.
Love comes to us still.
All: When nothing feels certain, this truth remains:
The Spirit is our constant companion, ushering us toward life.
One: Let every heart be lifted!
The kindom of God is so close.
Nothing can keep love from enfleshing among us.

***Opening Song Gather Us In** Marty Haugen **insert**

Opening Prayer
Spirit of God, you intercede through us with your sighs too deep for words. In the midst of all that aches, we know that you are with us. As we feel it all. As we hope for more. As we work together to find our way through uncertainties and loss. You accompany us with compassion and wisdom. Encourage us, O God, in the journey before us.
Amen.

Words of Assurance
People of God,
We were made to live out the dreams of God. Each of us, together.
Through our choices, our hopes, our communities.
God has given us the capacity to embody Divine hospitality. To practice radical love.
To be brave together and take risks on doing things differently.
So let us support and encourage one another,
praying thy kindom come, thy will be done.
Amen.

Song of Response



Welcoming New Members

First Reading: Matthew 13:31-33 and 44-46

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast
He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."
He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl
"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.
"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Second Reading
Those who desire to participate in the life of God will not be kept separate from it. Nothing - not life nor death nor rulers nor authorities - can keep Divine love at a distance. God is always close, always pursuing us, reaching out in hopes we will open our hearts and minds to God's gifts. Like Solomon, we are granted the wisdom of God when we seek it out above all else. But it will mean less riches, less power, less popularity. Like the merchant who sells everything to acquire the pearl, it may require even turning over our identity, transforming us into something else altogether. The kindom is around us, within us, between us - just waiting for our participation. In the painful gaps between our lived experience and the dreams of God yet enfleshed, the Spirit meets us, sustains us, and encourages our hearts.

***Hymn of Preparation Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness NCH #286 vs 1,2 and 4**

Sermon - "A Future Worth Living In"

Quiet Reflection

Special Music Draw The Circle Wide (M. Miller & G. Light; arr. G. Grosz)

Sharing Our Joys & Concerns *After each joy or concern, Pastor leads the congregation to respond "Lord, hear our prayer."*
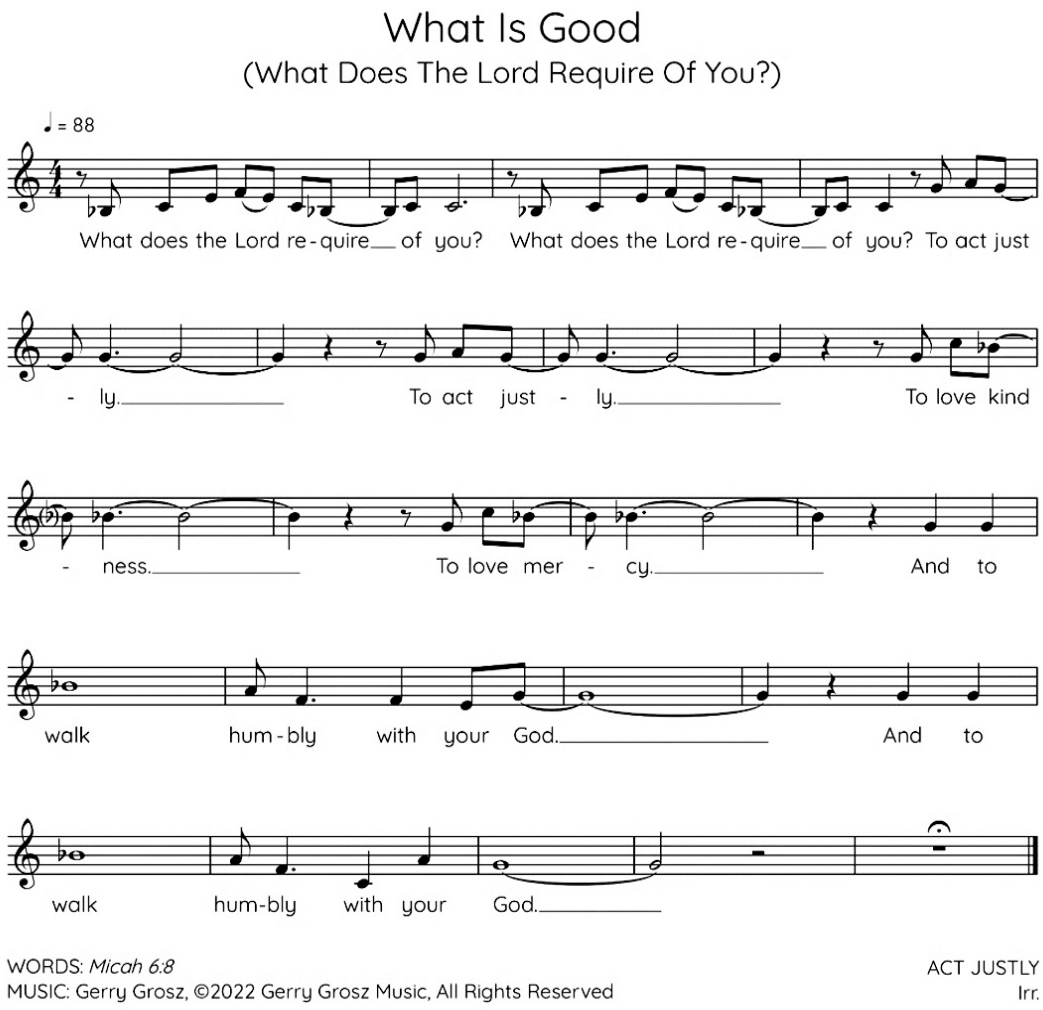
Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer
Our Creator *(Father, Mother, God)* **who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kindom come; your 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kindom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever. Amen.**

Offering

Invitation to Generosity
The kindom is like a mustard seed, Jesus said. The kindom is like the smallest offering. Where our gifts are nurtured in community, they will grow and multiply and blossom into sites of Divine hospitality. With joy, let us bring what we have together, trusting that it is enough.

Offering Song What is Good



Offering Prayer
Holy One, we bring our gifts to you with thanks. Through the gap between what we know and what we hope for can feel like a chasm that cannot be bridged, you renew our faith. Do not let us dismiss the small wonders of love that heal and transform. Help us to perceive the ordinary miracles of life that surround us, that we may be eager participants in the everyday grace of your kindom.
Amen.

Announcements/ Life of the Church

***Sending Song We are Marching in the Light of God #NCH 526**

***Benediction**

***Response**
And God will raise us up on eagles' wings,
bear us on the breath of dawn
make us to shine like the son,
and hold us in the palm of God's hand.

Postlude

Announcements

Luncheon following worship
Join us for a luncheon today to celebrate our new members.

Elders Group, Wednesday, July 29, at 6:30 on ZOOM

July Book Club
On Thursday, July 30 at 7:30 PM on Zoom, we will be reading ***The Housekeeper and the Professor***, by Yoko Ogawa**.** 191 pages. It is available from both the Marin and Sonoma County libraries as a book, an e-book, and an audiobook.

We are in need of liturgists, greeters, communion servers. If you are interested contact Amy in the office: office@fccsanrafael.org or call 415-479-2747

Remember the Food Bank Barrel
Please continue to bring in non-perishable food items. Canned goods, chili, peanut butter, cereal, tuna and canned meat, rice, pasta are always welcome. No glass please.

Pastoral Visit
Do you want a visit with Pastor Elisabeth? Call the church office 415-479-2747 or email: elismid@yahoo.com

Prayer Chain
Do you have a prayer request you would like included in the prayer chain? Email Julie Dowling at isabella1472@comcast.net to be added.

Remember your offering: Ways to give
*Paypal- You can make a one-time donation or set up regular monthly payments using a credit card or debit card. Just click the "Donate Now" button on our website or in each weekly email.
*set up automatic donations through your banking institution
*send your check to: FCC San Rafael: 8 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael, CA 94903

Sunday Servers
July 26
Liturgist: Caryl Hodges
Altar: Cathi Fuller
Greeter: Caryl Hodges
Coffee: Jackie Dema

August 2
Liturgist:
Altar:
Communion servers:
Greeter:
Coffee:

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SAN RAFAEL

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Pastor: Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg
Music Director: Gerry Grosz
Office Manager: Amy Powers

Office hours: Monday and Thursday 10:30 -2 pm