

***Call to Worship**

One: Bless the Holy One with our whole selves. Praise the Maker of our being!
Many: Remember the mighty deeds and the good works of our God.
One: The Sovereign One endows us with many gifts and equips us to do good work.
Many: Remember the mighty deeds and the good works of our God.
One: Holy Love entered the world without condemnation but with grace and forgiveness, mercy and compassion, redemption and restoration.
Many: Hallelujah! We give thanks for the mighty deeds and the good works of our God!

***Hymn #115** *Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain*

Invocation & Invitation to Prayer

Prayer of Yearning

God of grace, we need your strength in our weakness. We confess that we can be judgmental and hyper-critical of our neighbors, family, and friends. We project our own shortcomings on others in order to deflect attention from our mistakes. We withhold and condition forgiveness, mercy, and grace from those who wrong us at the same time we seek it for the wrongs we have done. Even still, we struggle to forgive ourselves. You have shown us the better way. Help us to follow your path—receiving and extending forgiveness in a world in need of an infusion of grace for transformation. In your mercy, O God, hear our prayer, and let us forgive as you forgive. Amen.

Words of Grace and Love

Hymn of Praise #276 *Great is Thy Faithfulness (refrain only)*
Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed thy hand hath provided;
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

**A Moment for Our Blessed Community
Celebrations & Announcements**

Anthem *We Shall Walk Through the Valley* Traditional

Scripture	Romans 14:1-12 Matthew 18:21-35
Sermon	State of Grace
*Hymn #298	<i>There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy</i>
Prayers of the People	
Our Lord's Prayer	
Sung Response	<i>Spirit of Life</i> Carolyn McDade <i>Spirit of Life come unto me. Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion,</i> <i>Blow in the wind, rise in the sea; move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.</i> <i>Roots hold me close; wings set me free: Spirit of life, come to me, come to me.</i>

Offertory
***Doxology**
Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***Blessing Our Offerings**

***Hymn #201 (in Sing!)** *Deep Peace*
Our Commission *(unison)*
Go forth into the world in peace, be of good courage,
hold fast to that which is good, render to no one evil for evil,
strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak,
help the afflicted, honor all people, love and serve the Lord,
caring for God’s earth and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Benediction

Postlude

*Please rise in body and/or spirit.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ✝ **Electronic Open Door** is weekly and should arrive in your email with Sunday worship link. The deadline for submissions is Thursday morning by 10 a.m.
- ✝ Are you curious about the **Conscious Eldering** course being offered this fall but unsure if you want to commit to the six weeks? You are invited to come to the first session, **Monday Sept 18, from 6:30-8:30 in the Clayton Room**, to check it out before committing to the remaining five meetings. We've invited one person who already knows she can't attend the remaining sessions, and you are equally free to decide whether the course is right for you at this time. Past participants and newcomers are both invited to the 6 weekly evening meetings. Begin or re-energize your eldering journey with a profound review of our lives to date, letting go of what no longer serves us, and setting intentions for our future. For more info, see the recent August Open Door or contact Mary Lee-Clark or Lorna Cheriton.
- ✝ **Sunday Supper today** at 4:30 pm.



Welcome to Second Congregational Church! We are an Open and Affirming, Green Justice Congregation of the United Church of Christ. We welcome to our worship and to our membership all people of faith, or in search of faith, without regard to age, race, gender, economic condition, ability, sexual identity, gender identity, or citizenship; and we affirm all persons beloved children of God. We invite all to share in the worship, full life, leadership, and employment opportunities of the church.

Forgiveness: Service Prayers for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ.

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, U.C.C. BENNINGTON, VERMONT Sunday September 17, 2023 16th Sunday after Pentecost

Rev. D. Mark Blank, Pastor
Jana Lillie, Liturgist

Matt Edwards, Music Director



Flowers this week are provided by Gary & Debbie Briggs

Welcome and Introductions

One: Whoever you are, or wherever you are on life's journey,
All: **You are welcome here!**

Prelude

Blessing the Child in All of Us