



***Trinity United Church of Christ***

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**Trinity United Church of Christ**

February 16, 2025

8AM and 10:30AM Worship

**Sixth Sunday after Epiphany**

*Awakening joyful service guided  
by our still speaking God!*

*\*indicates please stand as you are able;  
bold print indicates congregational response*

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TIME OF SHARING/GREETING

PRELUDE MUSIC – “Blessings” – *H. Sorenson*

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord. They shall be like a tree  
planted by the water, sending out its roots by the stream.

**Baptized and freed, grounded in love, let us worship God.**

**\*HYMN #313 “Like a Tree Beside the Waters”**

**\*PRAYER**

**God of life, in Christ you resurrect all things.**

**Raise us from death to life, that our transformation  
may bear witness to the power of your grace in our lives  
through Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead. Amen.**

**\*RESPONSE TO PRAYER #163 “Many are the Light-beams”**

*Many are the light-beams from the one light.*

*Our one light is Jesus.*

*Many are the light-beams from the one light; we are one in Christ.*

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**God of judgment and renewal, we admit to you and to each other  
that we have not always loved you and our neighbors as fully as  
you call us to love. We have failed to be good stewards of the air,  
the water, the animals, and the plants. We have turned away  
from you and toward our own self-interest. Forgive our  
shortsightedness. Help us turn back to you, to reach toward  
you as a tree sends its roots out toward water. Amen.**

*MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER*

**KYRIE #750**

Lord, have mercy upon us.

*Lord, have mercy upon us.*

Christ, have mercy upon us.

*Christ, have mercy upon us.*

Lord, have mercy upon us.

*Lord, have mercy upon us.*

**ASSURANCE OF GRACE**

**ANTHEM (10:30)**

**Senior Choir**

**TIME FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART**

**SCRIPTURE LESSONS**

Psalm 1 (Responsive)

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,  
or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;

**<sup>2</sup>but their delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on his law they meditate day and night.**

<sup>3</sup>They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its  
season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

**<sup>4</sup>The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.**

<sup>5</sup>Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

**<sup>6</sup>for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.**

Luke 6:17-26

**SERMON**

**"We Are Blessed!"**

**PRAYER/LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, 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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and glory forever. Amen**

**HYMN #170 “Your Ways Are Not Our Own”** (*Remain Seated*)

**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** (*Insert*)

**\*CELEBRATION OF OUR GIFTS**

**\*OFFERTORY RESPONSE #154 “Go Tell it on the Mountain”**

*Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.*

*Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.*

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**Holy One, bless and multiply these gifts we give  
as tokens of our trust in you.**

**Use them to bless the poor, feed the hungry,  
and comfort those who weep. Amen.**

**\*HYMN #497 “Guide My Feet”**

**\*FINAL BLESSING**

**\*POSTLUDE MUSIC**

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Elements from today's worship have been adapted from the following resources:

*Feasting on the Word: Worship Companion.* Kimberly Bracken Long, Editor.

Westminster John Knox Press. Kentucky. 2012.

*Affirmation of Faith*

The Rev. Dr. Amanda Burr is a United Methodist elder appointed to  
United Methodist Church of Palm Springs, California.

**PRELUDE:** *Blessings.* Text and Tune by Laura Mixon Story. Arranged by  
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**HYMNS:** *Like a Tree Beside the Waters.* Text by James F. D. Martin. Tune by  
Roy Hopp. Words ©1994 James F. D. Martin. ©1990, Selah Publishing Co., Inc.  
*Your Ways Are Not Our Own.* Text by Lavon Bayler. Tune by Lowell Mason and  
G. J. Webb. Words ©1988 The Pilgrim Press.

*Guide My Feet.* African - American Traditional. Arrangement ©1992 The  
Pilgrim Press.

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**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We believe in God,  
the creator of all things,  
the giver of life and breath.  
We believe in Jesus Christ,  
born Emmanuel, God with us,  
baptized and revealed the most beloved Son of God;  
he sought to heal humanity  
by taking our brokenness upon himself,  
suffering for us, dying for us  
and being raised from the dead for our sake  
and for the sake of all the world.  
We believe that he will come again.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
continually poured out refreshing our lives,  
leading us into a new day,  
ever-birthing the church,  
the body of Christ in the world.  
This Spirit is our soul companion and counselor of truth  
reminding us of the gift of faith,  
the ever presence of God  
and the promise of eternal life.  
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

## Like a Tree beside the Waters

James F. D. Martin, 1992

1. Like a tree be-side the wa-ters,  
nur-tured by your lov-ing care,  
We, O God, your sons and daugh-ters,  
your en-dur-ing wit-ness bear.  
In each pass-ing gen-er-a-tion  
may your voice of love be heard.  
Bless, we pray, this con-gre-ga-tion  
with your ho-ly, liv-ing Word.
2. Like a tree be-side the riv-er,  
draw-ing life from ho-ly streams,  
Fill us with your love for-ev-er;  
re-cre-ate our hopes and dreams.  
Through the storms of life sus-tain us  
by the wis-dom of your grace.  
May the chang-ing of the sea-sons  
find us in your warm em-brace.
3. We, be-side the liv-ing wa-ters,  
drink from your e-ter-nal life.  
Give to all, your sons and daugh-ters,  
faith that ris-es o-ver strife.  
O Liv-ing God, most glo-rious,  
strength-en us for life to-day.  
By the hope of time-less prom-ise  
guide your church up-on the Way.

Jer. 17:7-8

Lavon Bayler, 1988, rev. 1993

1. Your ways are not our own, O gra-cious God most high,  
Yet we would fol-low in your paths and on your love re-ly.
2. Christ teach-es us to bless the ones who curse and harm,  
To turn the oth-er cheek when struck, at-tack-ers to dis-arm.
3. Yet, we can-not ex-cuse a-buse in an-y form,  
For all are chil-dren of your care, and love must be our norm.
4. How shall we show your love, your par-don to be-lieve?  
You bid us share as we are blessed and give as we re-ceive.
5. For-give-ness is our joy, re-ceive-ing, giv-ing, too.  
Keep us from judg-ments hard and cruel, that we may dwell  
with you.

Luke 6:17–38; Rom. 12:9–21

African-American traditional; alt.

1. Guide my feet while I run this race,  
guide my feet while I run this race,  
guide my feet while I run this race,  
For I don't want to run this race in vain.
  
2. Hold my hand while I run this race,  
hold my hand while I run this race,  
hold my hand while I run this race,  
For I don't want to run this race in vain.
  
3. I'm your child while I run this race,  
I'm your child while I run this race,  
I'm your child while I run this race,  
For I don't want to run this race in vain.
  
4. Stand by me while I run this race,  
stand by me while I run this race,  
stand by me while I run this race,  
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

Heb. 12:1-15



Trinity United Church of Christ  
Gettysburg, PA

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany  
February 16, 2025



Sermon: *"We are Blessed!"*

Jeremiah 17:5-10  
Luke 6:17-26

Rev. Dr. Frederick A. Young  
Pastor

Quinn Caldwell in the UCC Daily Devotional this week, shared this...

*The heavens are the Lord's heavens, but the earth [God] has given to human beings. -  
Psalm 115:16 (NRSV)*

John McConnell was born near the beginning of the 20th century, the son of a Pentecostal preacher. He carried the faith he learned at his father's knee as he made his way through the various advances and horrors of the 20th century. When he saw "Earthrise," the first picture of the earth taken from space, in 1968, he was powerfully moved. He thought of humanity hurtling through space alone on that blue marble, and the thought of the verse above as a sort of caption for it.

The earth had been given to human beings by God, he believed, and we were screwing it up. Everything from nuclear war to plastics were ruining what God had given us. And though he did believe in a God that is active in human lives, that picture of our lonely planet convinced him that if anyone was going to help it fix its problems, it was going to have to be us. Nobody was going to show up and do it for us.

So, after a long career as a peace activist and educator, he turned to his next and greatest project: a day set aside to draw attention to the ecological balance we were throwing out of whack, and to recommit to peaceful coexistence. The first Earth Day was celebrated in 1970, and has been every year since, all because the son of a preacher man took both ancient faith and new discoveries very seriously.

Some read Psalm 115:16 and say, *"It's ours; we can do what we want."* Some see the photo and say, *"There is no God; we can do what we want."* McConnell, on the other hand, looked and read and said, *"Good gifts are meant to be cherished."*

Quinn G. Caldwell is Chaplain of the Protestant Cooperative Ministry at Cornell University.

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Whether sitting on the plain in Luke's Gospel or sitting in the pews of Christ's church today, the hopeful thoughts of John McConnell ring true. Humanity has been screwing it all up since the beginning. The author of Luke tells us the story of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain. Perhaps a more accurate account than the teaching shared on Matthew's mountain. Luke levels the playing field, placing the rich and the poor on equal ground, upsetting the culture. The prophet Jeremiah talks about a re-rooting of faith while distinguishing what is buried from what is lovingly planted.

*Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. <sup>6</sup>They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. <sup>7</sup>Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. <sup>8</sup>They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not*

*anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. <sup>9</sup>The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse— who can understand it? <sup>10</sup>I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.*

**Jeremiah 17:5-10**

The prophet's words remind me of the trees that surrounded the parsonage. In particular, the large pine trees toward the back, which towered over the house and grounds, demanding respect. During times of high winds, strong rains and heavy snows, the sounds emanating from those giants was enough to make you worry and wonder if they would plummet through the roof. While the other trees in the yard transform with the seasons, undergoing a visible resurrection, the evergreens remained the same. Their song was one of stability and solidity. Their transformation happened below the surface, as their roots continued to twist and turn and grow, adding to their strength. Unfortunately, this same strength was the main reason they needed to be removed a few weeks ago. Our faith is much like nature. It begins as a small seed and continues to grow and get stronger. As we learn new things and

experience more of life, our faith needs to be pruned and shaped to properly respond to our surroundings.

When we hear the words of Jeremiah, we must ask ourselves, are we like the tumbleweed, aimlessly wandering or do we resemble a tree transplanted in Eden, rooted in the possibility of God's vision? There is much in our modern world that stands in the way of rooting: Each generation has experienced wars, communities without proper sustenance, illnesses that destroy human life, and children living cold or hungry; to name a few. Issues that demand to know if we are planted and poised for action, spinning helplessly in the wind, or buried so deep our sluggish senses are unable to respond.

Today, as we hear about early discipleship, our Messiah's teaching and crowds that hunger for a different narrative, we are shown who Jesus is, God's own Beloved. We hear the Good News he brings. We are also called to make a difference; to bring about the way of blessing, not woe. How we respond, how we live, what we do, matters.

Our scriptures this week are not easy to digest, because both texts require us to consider the foundations of our faith and our understanding of what it means to be truly blessed. Jesus prayed with his disciples on the mountain and led them down to where a crowd had assembled. Diseased, outcast, possessed, and poor; they heard his words of inclusion and recognized the presence of something new and powerful happening around them. As followers of Christ, it is our calling to ensure that each generation experiences those same new and powerful happenings. The compassion of Christ lives in our hearts, not to help us assimilate to societal norms, but to give us the strength and courage to offer an alternative life of peace, hope and love.

We are a people who celebrate one human family! This is not a concept created by one church, or denomination like the UCC, but comes directly from Jesus! Love your God and love your neighbor. Christ placed no restrictions on these words. **Love God, Love All!** Yet, humanity twists Jesus' words to fit within their vision.

Jesus' Sermon on the Plain jars us out of our faithful complacency. The God Christ speaks of is not always the God we proclaim. We tend to put God into our own neat and tidy boxes. Luckily for us, God is so much more than we can understand, and more than willing to break down the barriers we build. On the Plain, our Creator invades our dreams and tests our hearts, reminding us to empty ourselves, turn away from the world and by grace, receive the fullness of blessings God offers to the destitute, the marginalized, the misplaced and the expendable.

How is your heart? Is it full of blessings or woes? Christ told those on the Plain that to take the beatitudes seriously was to go against the grain of their time and place. Jeremiah, shared with the Israelites that the Lord would test the mind and search the heart. When Jesus was with his closest followers in the Upper Room, he took the cup in his hands and said it was a sign of the new covenant. Jeremiah's vision is rooted in our common life and worship. If God truly does search our hearts, then may our hope be that God chooses to dwell there as well. Where have you placed your roots? Amen.