

**First Congregational Church of St. Louis**  
*United Church of Christ*  
*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

**Sunday May 2, 2021**

**BELLS CALLING TO WORSHIP**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**INTROIT**

“Praise Praise”

*Cameroon Traditional*  
*arr. Ralph M. Johnson*

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: God calls us to a ministry of love.

**People: Beloved, let us love one another.**  
**That means everyone.**

Leader: Those who love God must love their sisters and brothers also.

**People: May we accept God’s call**  
**to this mysterious ministry of love. Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN**

“O Love, How Deep,  
How Broad, How High”

*Text attr. Thomas á Kempis*  
*trans. Benjamin Webb*  
*Tune English ballad c. 1415*

**O love, how deep, how broad, how high,**  
**beyond all thought and fantasy,**  
**that God, the Son of God, should take**  
**our mortal form for mortals' sake.**

**For us by wickedness betrayed,**  
**for us, in crown of thorns arrayed,**  
**he bore the shameful cross and death;**  
**for us gave up his dying breath.**

**For us he rose from death again;**  
**for us he went on high to reign;**  
**for us he sent the Spirit here**  
**to guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.**

**All glory to our Lord and God,**  
**for love so deep, so high, so broad:**  
**the Trinity whom we adore**  
**forever and forevermore.**

## PASSING OF THE PEACE

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

#### SONG

“Celtic Alleluia”

*Tune Christopher Walker  
and Fintan O’Carroll*

#### SCRIPTURE

##### 1 John 4:7-21 (The Message)

My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn’t know the first thing about God, because God *is* love—so you can’t know God if you don’t love. This is how God showed God’s love for us: God sent God’s only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that God loved us and sent the Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they’ve done to our relationship with God.

My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and God’s love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

This is how we know we’re living steadily and deeply in God, and God in us: God has given us life from God’s life, from God’s very own Spirit. Also, we’ve seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that God sent the Son as Savior of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God’s Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we’ve embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God.

God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we’re free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ’s. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love.

We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. God loved us first.

If anyone boasts, “I love God,” and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won’t love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can’t see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You’ve got to love both.

## COMMUNION

### LITURGY OF BLESSING

Leader: Let us gather our hearts.

**People: Our hearts are at home in God.**

Leader: Let us give thanks for God's unfailing love.

**People: God's love endures forever.**

Leader: Let every heart be lifted up.

**People: Let us prepare to receive our Christ.**

### COMMUNION PRAYER

### TEACHING

Dr. Sarah Bereza, Hannah Rice,  
Emily Stokes, Rev. Mia White

### ANTHEM

“Draw Us in the Spirit’s Tether”

*Text Percy Dearmer  
Music by Harold Friedell*

*Draw us in the Spirit's tether; for when humbly, in thy name,  
Two or three are met together, thou art in the midst of them:  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Touch we now thy garment's hem.*

*As disciples used to gather In the name of Christ to sup,  
Then with thanks to God the Giver break the bread and bless the cup,  
Alleluia! Alleluia! So knit thou our friendship up.*

*All our meals and all our living make us sacraments of thee,  
That be caring, helping, giving, we may true disciples be.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! We will serve thee faithfully.*

### OFFERING & BENEDICTION

**CHORAL BENEDICTION** “May the Road Rise Up to Meet You” *arr. Matthew Stewart  
and Ron Hall*

*May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine on your face. May the rain fall soft upon your fields.  
And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.*

### POSTLUDE

“Toccatà in Seven”

*John Rutter*