



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
235 South Kenilworth Avenue, Elmhurst, IL
Partners in Christ's Service since 1890

MOTHER'S DAY

At Home or Small Group Worship for May 9, 2021

OPENING HYMN – *audio available on the church website* Michelle Maiers, Meg McGarry, Kevin Loeper, Al Thurkow - vocals
Dave Benziger - guitar

#420 I Come With Joy

1 I come with joy, a child of God,
forgiven, loved and free,
the life of Jesus to recall,
in love laid down for me,
in love laid down for me.

4 The Spirit of the risen Christ,
unseen, but ever near,
is in such friendship better known,
alive among us here,
alive among us here.

2 I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread,
in Christ's communion bread.

5 Together met, together bound
by all that God has done,
we'll go with joy, to give the world,
the love that makes us one,
the love that makes us one.

3 As Christ breaks bread and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
and strangers now are friends,
and strangers now are friends.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Praise the Lord, who has shown us the wonders of his unfailing love.

Who leads us with wisdom and guides us by the Holy Spirit.

Lord, we put our trust. You are our God, and our lives are in your hands.

Let your light shine on us as we celebrate you in worship.

OPENING PRAYER

God of Compassion, you care for us with a Mother's gentle touch. You sustain us with holy love that surrounds us, forgives us, and encourages us. You set us free to embrace wisdom and seek knowledge. You call us into families of faith where our spiritual roots grow deep and strong. We are children of the living meant to live in harmony and peace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
And to the Holy Ghost: as it was in the beginning
Is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Prayer Hymn #263

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place,
I can feel his mighty power and his grace;
I can hear the brush of angels' wings,
I see glory on each face;
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

Silent Prayer

PASTORAL PRAYER – *available on the church website*

Calvin Jackson

OUR LORD'S PRAYER – *available on the website*

Michelle Maiers, vocals

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. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE – *available on the church website*

Martha Mendoza

MISSION MOMENT

Teen Parent Connection

PRAYER SONG

A Prayer for Healing

Michelle Maiers, Meg McGarry, Kevin Loeper, Al Thurkow- vocals
Dave Benziger, guitar

SCRIPTURE – *available on the church website*

Don Haraf

1 Kings 3: 3-14 NIV

Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.”

Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

“Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.”

Wisdom

Joke: When I was a kid my mother caught me chewing on an electric cable. She wasn't mad but she did ground me.

Happy Mother's Day, everyone! Today's scripture lesson has a subject that I think relates well to moms - wisdom.

A good working definition of wisdom is the ability to make sound judgments in matters of life or decision making. Wisdom seeks truth. Wisdom deals with the practical affairs of life and is universal. Every civilization, every culture, every religion deals with the inherent value of wisdom. Confucius said that wisdom is a virtue and that wisdom comes from actively reflecting on what has been learned, rather than passively learning and memorizing facts.

Many ancient writings on wisdom often focus on life lessons, ethics, moral codes, and even the handling of knowledge. Perhaps most famous from the Bible is King Solomon's wisdom dealing with two women who each claim to be the rightful mother of a baby. Solomon says to "cut the baby in half" so that each lady would at least have half of this child. The birth mother reacts quickly and says to leave the baby whole and give it to the other woman. With this selfless act, the true mother is revealed, and the baby is saved. Though a seemingly cruel suggestion, Solomon demonstrates wisdom in his decision-making.

In our scripture lesson, we hear another story about Solomon interacting with God. Once again, delving into the beautiful subject of wisdom. The story reminds us that wisdom is all around us. It is something we all seek. It is something that we all want to pass along to the next generation. And yet, wisdom can be surprisingly allusive.

There is something timeless about wisdom. As theologians have often said, wisdom is the very opposite of "new." And wisdom offers more than just a perspective. Wisdom *is* perspective – it is truth. The paradox is that wisdom has authority but is vulnerable to being easily dismissed.

We know that wisdom doesn't come to us as a particular set of facts to learn and commit to memory. We learn wisdom by listening, living, experiencing.

I remember the very simple and wise instruction my grandfather passed on to me when I was learning how to drive. He suggested that I not drive too close to the side of the road whenever possible because that is where all of the broken glass and other sharp debris is. He learned over the years that the debris could put a hole in your tire, leaving you stranded in some faraway place.

My grandmother taught me how to make a casserole dish I loved as a kid. I asked her how long it took to make. She said, when you can smell what it is, it's done. My dad always said, "Pay yourself first." By that, he meant 'save your money.' And my mom would like to say, "Just ask. What's the big deal if someone says, no?" If you don't ask for the opportunity, it may never come. Such wise guidance – people who love us are often quick to pass along this kind of wise advice.

Wisdom is everywhere in the bible. The Book of Proverbs says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all of your getting, you get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7).

Today's scripture is about King David's son Solomon. The story is a great example of the value of wisdom over such things as "power," "control," "self-gratification." Solomon demonstrates an understanding and the value of wisdom.

Remember, David and Solomon are opposite personalities. David was a field general and a warrior; Solomon was a level-headed thinker. David was a "self-made" man, Solomon was the scholar. Solomon understood his father's legacy and knew he needed to establish his own.

When we are called to do "big" work what do we need most? Solomon needed a clear perspective. In a dream, God says, "Ask for whatever you want, and it is yours." Solomon says, 'Give me an understanding, give me the ability to discern between right and wrong, and between good and evil.' It's a humble reply to a big offer.

God is just as impressed by what we don't ask for. Solomon doesn't ask for wealth, a long and happy life, or for his enemies to be eliminated. Solomon gets what he asks for. And, he even gets those things he doesn't ask for. He will end up living a long, rich life because he doesn't have to live in fear of his enemies.

So why doesn't the story end here? The moral is appealing. If you're smart enough to seek wisdom to have a better perspective, you have God's blessing, and then only good things will happen. Seems good to me, how about you?

Well, we are human, after all. Solomon becomes a great king and is famous for his wisdom. Solomon builds the great temple and unites the people. But, he will forget his perspective. He becomes obsessed with the finer things, becomes demanding of the people, enjoys his popularity.

Solomon lost his perspective to God's ways. By doing so, he sets the stage for a catastrophic undoing of all he and his father David had built. Not long after Solomon's death, their achievements will lay in ruin.

Maxwell Grant says that "We should be reminded not only of the beauty of wisdom, and the power of wisdom but of the precariousness of our own hold on wisdom. Wisdom is not a once-and-for-all kind of thing. The story of Solomon is a decidedly cautionary tale."

He goes on to say, "It's like walking a candle down a long hallway and realizing that there's a breeze you didn't even feel before, but it's been there all along, and now that breeze is trying to blow out that candle." We, too, are vulnerable to believing we can make it down the long hallway with that candle. But stories like this and all of the lessons of Jesus remind us that wisdom is not the candle. Wisdom is more like the commitment to keeping the flame alive.

Wisdom isn't the candle. It's the power that moves the candle out into the world, and the commitment to keeping the flame alive.

Proverbs says, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore, get wisdom, and with all your getting, you will get understanding." Solomon started out that way, but with the successes, the humility slowly disappeared. Jesus calls us into a different kind of life - a life not insulated in comfort and safety, but a life that gives itself away in love - just like a mother's love.

Jesus calls us to learn from our experiences, our ordinary moments, and our commitment to humility and openness...to practice patience and perspective, forbearance and fortitude, kindness and understanding."

Christ, in his wisdom, doesn't so much make this a command but a promise. The more we can cherish the light and take on the work of the kingdom, the more we will know what it is to be in the presence of a God who loves us dearly. AMEN.

OFFERTORY – *available on the church website*

*Our gifts of time, our gifts of talents, our gifts of money;
we offer you all we have to the building of your kingdom.*

A Mother's Love

Meg McGarry, vocals

Dave Benziger, guitar

DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Gracious God, accept our gifts – of time, talent, and treasure - as evidence of our desire to participate with you in the care of your beloved creation. These gifts symbolize our thanksgiving for all that you provide. Through these gifts, we praise you. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN – *audio available on the church website*

Michelle Maiers, Meg

McGarry, Kevin Loeper, Al Thurkow - vocals

Dave Benziger - guitar

#2 Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

1 Joyful, joyful, we adore thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before thee,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive our fear and doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.

2 All thy works with joy surround
thee,
earth and heaven reflect thy rays,
stars and angels sing around thee,
center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain
call us to rejoice in thee.

3 Thou art giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
well-spring of the joy of living,
ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou the Father, Christ our Brother,
all who live in love are thine;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to the joy divine.

4 Mortals, join the happy chorus;
stars of morning, take your part;
love divine is reigning o'er us,
binding those of tender heart.
Ever singing, move we onward,
victors in the midst of strife,
joyful music lifts us sunward
in the triumph song of life.

BENEDICTION

Go forth and be of good courage. Hold fast to that which is good. Render no one evil for evil. Strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the afflicted. Honor all people. Love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Peace be with you, amen.



Teen Parent Connection

It is a tradition at the church to have a Teen-Parent Connection collection from Mother's Day to Father's Day. This year we are excited to have a parent come and speak again for Mother's Day.

Teen-Parent Connection Mission Statement:

To serve the community through education on the realities and responsibilities of teenage pregnancy, and through long-term assistance to parents for their development of self-esteem, parenting skills, and empowerment toward self-sufficiency.

Their programs benefit DuPage County. **There are three ways to offer your support:**

1. Tithely - Please specify Teen-Parent Connection
2. Teen-Parent Connection has a wishlist with Amazon. Here is the link: <http://a.co/fmWYUjn> They have items as low as \$4.00.
3. Mail a check to the church and someone from our mission board will drop off all money collected at the end of the collection period. Please specify Teen-Parent Connection in the memo line of your check.

Checks can be mailed to:
First Congregational Church
Attention: Heather Cross
235 S. Kenilworth Ave
Elmhurst, IL 60126