



# First Congregational Church of Anoka United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation  
February 26, 2023 ♦ First Sunday in Lent



This bulletin is designed to assist you as you watch our livestreamed worship service, whether you follow along live or view it at a later time. The stream can be found on our YouTube channel at this location:

<https://www.youtube.com/@AnokaUCC>

Prelude

Koki Sato

Congregational Introit

“My Life Flows on in Endless Song” #476 (v. 1)

**My life flows on in endless song; above earth’s lamentation,  
I hear the sweet, though far-off hymn, that hails a new creation.  
Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing;  
it finds an echo in my soul—how can I keep from singing?**

Welcome & Announcements

*If you are a guest with us today, welcome! If you are comfortable sharing your information with us, there are cards in the pew holders that you can use for that purpose (place them in the offering plate).*

*If you would like to join our mailing list, email [office@uccanoka.org](mailto:office@uccanoka.org) and ask to be added.*

\* Opening Hymn

“Shadow and Substance” #398

**Shadow and substance, wonder and mystery,  
spellbinding spinner of atoms and earth;  
soul of the cosmos, person and energy,  
source of our being: we sing of your worth.**

**We are your image, formed in community,  
sisters and brothers of Adam and Eve.  
You gave us color, custom and history;  
teach us to honor what others receive.**

**Naming the nameless Spirit of unity,  
scanning the heavens for signs of your care;  
God of the ages, give us humility;  
guide us to mystical union in prayer.**

\* Call to Worship (adapted from Psalm 90)

One: Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

**Many: Before the mountains were brought forth, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.**

One: A thousand years in your sight are like an evening;

**Many: they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning.**

One: Who considers the power of your Love? Your Love is as great as the loyalty that is due you.

**Many: So teach us to count our days, that we may gain a wise heart.**

One: Teach us to love our neighbor as you love us.

**Many: Teach us to love, and not to hate.**

One: Teach us carefully, day by day, to not fear what is different.

**Many: Teach us carefully, year by year, to embrace what not like us.**

One: Teach us before it's too late, Holy One!

**Many: Teach us to be full of care! Amen!**

Special Music

“You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught”      Rodgers/Hammerstein  
*from the musical South Pacific; soloist, Linda Theisen*

*You’ve got to be taught to hate and fear. You’ve got to be taught from year to year.  
It’s got to be drummed in your dear little ear. You’ve got to be carefully taught.  
You’ve got to be taught to be afraid of people whose eyes are differently made,  
and people whose skin is a different shade, you’ve got to be carefully taught.  
You’ve got to be taught before it’s too late, before you are six or seven or eight,  
to hate all the people your relatives hate, you’ve got to be carefully taught!  
You’ve got to be carefully taught!*

A Time for Children (10:30)

*ADVISORY: The livestream of the service continues during the Children’s Time;  
if your child sits facing the Pastor their face shouldn’t appear on camera.*

Prayer of Preparation (sung, unison)

*An Argentine folk song.*

“Holy, Holy, Holy”

**Holy, holy, holy.  
My heart, my heart adores you!  
My heart knows how to say to you:  
“You are holy, Lord!”**



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly. My heart, my heart a - dores you! My  
 ¡San - to, san - to, san - to, mi co - ra - zón te a - do - ra! Mi



heart knows how to say to you: You are ho - ly, Lord!  
 co - ra - zón te sa - be de-cir: ¡San - to e - res, Dios!

Scripture Reading – Luke 10:25-37

Lector, **Congregation**

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. **"Teacher,"** he said, **"what must I do to inherit eternal life?"** <sup>26</sup> He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" <sup>27</sup> He answered, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."** <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." <sup>29</sup> But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, **"And who is my neighbor?"** <sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' <sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" <sup>37</sup> He said, **"The one who showed him mercy."** Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

**Many: Thanks be to God.**

Now is the time approaching, by prophets long foretold,  
 When all shall dwell together, secure and manifold.  
 Let war be learned no longer, let strife and tumult cease,  
 all earth a blessed garden that God shall tend in peace.

Let all that now divides us remove and pass away,  
 like mists of early morning before the blaze of day.  
 Let all that now unites us more sweet and lasting prove,  
 a closer bond of union, in blessed lands of love.

O long-expected dawning, come with your cheering ray!  
 Yet shall the promise beckon and lead us not astray.  
 O sweet anticipation! It cheers the watchers on  
 to pray, and hope, and labor till Christ’s new realm is come.

### Prayers of the People

*If you wish to share a prayer with the congregation (joy, concern, hope, worry, or anything at all), raise your hand and a Deacon will bring you a microphone. Offer your prayer and finish by saying, “God in your love” to which we will all respond, “Hear our prayer.”*

### Sung Prayer

Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God; in -  
 cline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.

### Prayer of Our Savior (unison)

*The Prayer has many versions; pray whichever you desire (debts, sins, trespasses, etc.). We affirm that God has many names, so use one of the suggested or another of your choosing.*

**Our Father/Mother/Creator, 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Offering

Text-to-Give: **844-334-1477**

*Thank you for your gifts to our ministries!*

*If you are watching from home (live or later), please consider adding to the Offering by sending your gifts by mail, text, or online ([uccanoka.org/donate](http://uccanoka.org/donate)).*

*You can support the church further through the RaiseRight program: [www.raiseright.com](http://www.raiseright.com). Our unique church ID is 9WKLGX8TRZCN.*

Offertory

Koki Sato

\* Doxology

“My Life Flows on in Endless Song” #476 (v. 4)

**I lift my eyes, the cloud grows thin; I see the blue above it;  
and day by day this pathway smooths, since first I learned to love it.  
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a fountain ever springing;  
all things are mine since I am Christ’s—how can I keep from singing?**

\* Benediction

\* Congregational Blessing

“God Be With You” (#809)

Dorsey/Hutchins

**God be with you. God be with you. God be with you ‘til we meet again.  
O God be with you. God be with you. God be with you ‘til we meet again.**

Postlude

Koki Sato

*You may be seated as you listen to the Postlude. If you choose to depart at this time, please speak gently as you exit out of respect for those who choose to listen.*

#### Acknowledgements

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## Sermon Text

*You've got to be taught to hate and fear.*

I think that's something that many of us agree on. I'm mindful about our current debates about reversing the tragic consequences of systemic racism. Those who are advocating for such repentance, reconciliation, and reparation understand that we have taught our children to suspect, to fear, to hate. In our country, that has most painfully involved white folks teaching their children to hate their black neighbors. Then, when those children become adults, they have power to perpetuate systems of white supremacy that continue to marginalize communities of color.

I believe that my white neighbors who have pushed back on expanding civil rights have sometimes done so out of the same conviction: that our children are being taught to hate and fear. But in this case, the core conviction appears to be that we who are white are teaching our children to hate themselves. To hate their whiteness. To feel guilty for being white, as if it were all their fault that America once enslaved people of color.

I don't want to dismiss those fears. I think they're genuine, inasmuch as fear is a primal, powerful emotion against which we all struggle. And of the many things that trigger fear, isn't one of them pain? Discomfort? Perhaps even guilt and shame? Perhaps also change? So I think I understand why there is such pushback against books like Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist* and DiAngelo's *White Fragility*. Far from being indoctrinating to some false premise, books like these speak truthfully about the legacy of whiteness in America and how so many of our neighbors of color still live in a nation that hasn't truly grappled with the legacy of Jim Crow. Regardless of how I might caricature it, there's a fear that teaching these uncomfortably true histories will cause our kids to denigrate themselves as their ancestors denigrated others.

This isn't a new story. It's always been difficult to drum into our ears that we've been taught to be afraid of people who pose no threat to us, who aren't intrinsically dangerous, who aren't out to get us. They—whoever “they” are in any given instance—aren't out to reverse the social order so that the privileged will become marginalized and the slaves will become masters. While revenge is an altogether human failing, the assumption that revenge is coming is an even bigger one. It stops us from listening to each other and coming to understand that what we fear most won't come to pass if we simply treat each other with kindness and love.

Jesus struggled to get the crowds to hear this lesson, and I don't think for a second that some of those folks who heard his parables didn't get up angrily and stomp off. Especially when he told them about the Samaritan. This wasn't a merely case where he was tweaking the upper crust, the folks with varying levels of earthly power. While the crowds might not have understood that they were supposed to identify with the priests and Levites, they had to have understood that Jesus was pressing down right on that fear, right on that prejudice that folks had about the Samaritans.

Purity was the issue, as it so often is. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah in particular touch upon this, because they deal with intra-community politics among those who have returned from the Babylonian Exile. Ezra, the priest, is particularly concerned with the intermixing of “holy seed” and “the peoples of the lands,” an act that would dilute the perceived purity of the returning Exiles. They deem themselves to be the true inheritors of Moses, and those who were left behind to be lesser. Thus, intermarriage was not just discouraged; existing marriages that were considered “interfaith” were dissolved, with the impure sent away.

When Jesus starts talking about Samaritans, his listeners wouldn't just remember the days after Babylon; they'd remember the days after Assyria. For when the Assyrian army conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the years 732-720 BCE, not everyone was carted away. Those who were left behind continued their religious practices and evolved into their own sect, distinct from the Judaism that

came later, and their land became known as Samaria. Among other differences in their traditions, they considered Mount Gerizim to be the home of God, not Mount Zion. Over time, the Jewish people in the time of Jesus came to think of the Samaritans as, if you'll forgive my use of the phrase, "Jews In Name Only."

*You've got to be taught to hate all the people your relatives hate.*

When the lawyer tries to test Jesus and asks that fateful question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus responds with the story. A man who we assume was Jewish was going down to Jericho. That route is riddled with hiding places for thieves and bandits, so the crowd probably isn't surprised when the man gets mugged. Now Jesus starts to set them up. When the priest comes and passes on by without helping, perhaps the crowd is nudging each other and saying things like, "No surprise there!" Priests sat higher in the social order, and certainly the lower classes held some resentment for them. The same would hold for the Levite. When Jesus says a Samaritan is passing by, the crowd is primed now to assume the same thing. They expect the Samaritan to pass on by, or as some of them might think more likely, he'll go through the man's pockets and look for loose change as if he were completely dead rather than mostly dead. Of course, that's not what happens. The curveball is that the hated Samaritan is the one who administers first aid to the mugged guy, takes him someplace safe to recuperate, and even pays for the man's expenses. All the while, the crowd is sitting there, murmuring, shifting uncomfortably in their seats, wondering what it all meant that Jesus made a Samaritan the hero of the story, and to pour a little bit of salt in the wound, the lawyer gets it right away.

It's so easy to tell stories about this poor guy from a backwater town poking holes in the egos of the powerful. It's far less easy to really wrestle with stories like this one, where it feels like Jesus is talking directly to us. Because we've all been taught to hate and fear. I love my queer neighbors, but love is harder to come by for the homophobe. It's easy to love you all who sit in these pews; it's harder to love the ones in a fundamentalist, storefront church in Northfield. It's so comforting and natural to love the ones who read the Bible as a collection of stories written by people. I struggle a lot more to love those who read those stories literally, using Scriptural words to justify hate and discrimination against those whom I love.

Somewhere along the way, I was taught to hate and fear those folks. To scorn and distrust them. To think the worst of them. To fear them.

*It's so easy to forget that many of them are just as afraid of me.*

*South Pacific* isn't the only music pressing on this discomfort. Sondheim did it in *Into the Woods*: **Careful the things you say, children will listen.** Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young called upon us to **teach your children well.** Whitney Houston even implored us to **teach them well and let them lead the way.** We can't just be passive about that. We have to teach our children to love and trust. We have to teach them from year to year. We have to drum into each little ear that skin color is just skin color. Eye shape is just eye shape. That hate has no home here. The wisdom of these songs is critically important!

*Except for a tiny, inconvenient detail.*

*The children already know.*

Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." (Mark 10:15)
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Children are born knowing exactly who their neighbors are. There's a reason you can look up countless videos on YouTube of black and white children calling themselves identical twins because they are wearing the same shirt. At the risk of starting a second sermon when I'm supposed to be ending the first one, perhaps in this much I can get behind the doctrinal silliness of Original Sin—that is, if our Original Sin is teaching each other to hate and fear. Because I don't believe for a second that we "fell." We don't

exit the womb, filled with hate. We are born knowing how to love. Everything that comes later is reprogramming.

That's what Rodgers and Hammerstein were getting at, after all. They refused to remove "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught" from the show even if it meant the show would fail. Even though lawmakers in Georgia were so offended by the song's implicit support of interracial marriage that they proposed a bill to outlaw any entertainment they thought was inspired by Communism.

The song is as powerful today as then. Hear what the Spirit is singing through its lyrics.  
Amen.

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*First Congregational Church, UCC of Anoka is an Open and Affirming Christian Community for all. We affirm that the image of God is most fully reflected in diversity. We invite all people to share their energy and talents in full participation with our community. We welcome all individuals and families of any sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, relationship status, race, national origin, socioeconomic status, age, mental and physical health or ability, or belief. Together, we celebrate these and all other facets of one's essential being.*