



First Congregational Church of Anoka United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation
July 9, 2023 ♦ 6th Sunday after Pentecost



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>

Welcome & Announcements

If you would like to join our mailing list, email office@uccanoka.org and ask to be added.

Prelude

Gideon Scheeler

The Church Bell Rings

* Opening Hymn

“Here I Am, Lord” (pages 12 and 13)

**I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?**

**[refrain] Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.**

**I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people’s pain.
I have wept for love of them—they turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send? [refrain]**

**I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame;
I will set a feast for them; my hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send? [refrain]**

A Time for Children

A Liturgy of Welcome and Installation for Pastor Kelsey Renk

Greeting

Pastor Chris (to all): In the United Church of Christ, the responsibility to assess and authorize ministers is vested in the Association, the level of covenantal relationship just above the local congregation. The Committee on Ministry of the Minnesota Conference, Acting as an Association, has walked with Kelsey for many years on her path to ministry. Recently, at a meeting of the Committee, they fully approved her for Licensed Ministry as a member of the staff of our congregation. This confers upon Kelsey the authority to administer the sacraments and engage in such other aspects of ministry as we, a local congregation, deem appropriate.

Church Representative: Installation is the action of an Association of the UCC in cooperation with a local church. Installation confirms and celebrates the covenantal relationship among a local church, its ministerial staff, and the United Church of Christ. Installation is a sign that these covenantal partners are committed to share mutually in the mission of the UCC and of the wider, ecumenical Church.

Pastor Chris (to Kelsey): In recognition of your Authorization, I invite you, Kelsey, to come forward now as a sign of your acceptance of this responsibility.

Exhortation

Pastor Chris (to the congregation): Hear these words from the Apostle Paul. We beg you, siblings in Christ, to pay proper respect to those who work among you, caring for you in the name of Jesus. Treat them with the greatest respect and love because of the work they do. Be at peace among yourselves.

Pastor Chris (to Kelsey): We urge you, our sister, to warn the idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, and be patient with all.

Church Representative (to the congregation): See that no one pays back wrong for wrong, but at all times make it your aim to do good to one another and to all people. Be joyful always, pray at all times, and be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants of you in your life in Jesus our Christ. Amen.

Covenant

Pastor Chris (to the congregation): Beloved in Christ, we have declared that, having gathered under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have engaged Kelsey Renk to minister in this place as our Minister of Visitation and that we now receive her as blessed by God to this ministry. The Minnesota Conference, Acting as an

Association, has declared that Kelsey has met all of the necessary conditions for installation to this office.

Church Representative (to Kelsey): Kelsey, seeing that we have affirmed your ministry by adding you to our staff as Minister of Visitation and that the United Church of Christ has blessed this relationship, are you willing to enter this covenant with the people of First Congregational Church?

Kelsey: I am willing, and I promise to serve this church faithfully as I care for the people of this local church, celebrate the sacraments, and perform other ministerial responsibilities as I may be asked in collaboration and cooperation with the Pastor and the people. I do so willingly and in loving relationship with the United Church of Christ.

Pastor Chris (to the congregation): People of First Congregational Church, will you affirm this covenant we make today with Kelsey?

Congregation: We, the people of First Congregational Church UCC of Anoka, receive Kelsey as our Minister of Visitation, and we promise to labor with her in the ministry of the gospel and to give her due honor and support. We gather with her and with the UCC as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ's name.

Prayer of Installation

Pastor Chris: Let us pray. Loving God, you have blessed us all as we have made promises before you. Enable us to keep those vows, that we may remain steadfast in faith and fruitful in our work. Bless, we pray, your servant Kelsey, that she may perform her ministry with love and grace. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon her, on the people of this congregation, and on all of the churches of the Minnesota Conference, that our mutual ministry may be served with all faithfulness, diligence, and courage.

Congregation: Amen!

Declaration

Church Representative (to Kelsey): In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of our congregation, I declare you duly installed as Minister of Visitation of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, of Anoka, Minnesota.

Laying on of Hands

Pastor Chris: The act of laying on of hands comes from an ancient tradition. In it, we hold that we are passing along the blessing of the Holy Spirit from the earliest

believers all the way to today. While in some times and places this act is related to the idea of apostolic succession, at Anoka UCC we recognize what the Apostle Paul taught: that each of us is a temple to the Holy Spirit who resides within. As we lay hands on Kelsey, we embrace that conviction and join into further covenant together through this ancient practice.

Congregation, singing:

“Pour Out Your Spirit”

C. Grundy

From the sac - red wa - ters of my birth
to the sac - red wa - ters of this hour,
I have leaned up - on You who knit me in my
moth - er's womb. O pour out Your Spir - it now.

Additional Remarks

Giving of Gifts

Special Music

“Open My Eyes”

arr. Gumma

Kari Johnson and Erin Heers-McArdle, Bell Duet

*Children ages 3 and up may depart at this time for faith formation activities.
Activity bags are available in the back of the sanctuary for those who might enjoy them.*

Scripture Reading – 1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19-21

Lector, **Congregation**

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. ² At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³ the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the LORD called, **"Samuel! Samuel!"** and he said, "Here I am!" ⁵ and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you

called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. ⁶ The LORD called again, "**Samuel!**" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." ⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸ The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "**Samuel! Samuel!**" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

¹⁹ As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD. ²¹ The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

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

Many: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Rev. Chris McArdle

Hymn

"Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether" #337 (vv. 1-2)

**Draw us in the Spirit's tether, for when humbly in your name,
two are three are met together, you are in the midst of them;
Alleluia! Alleluia! Touch we now your 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 now bind our friendship up.**

We Come to the Table

Pastor Kelsey Renk, Presider

Invitation

One: Jesus knew that one of the most potent ways God seeks communion with us is at a Table flowing with food and drink. In the act of dining, Jesus offered God's grace to any and all who sought it, be they rich or poor; tax collector or sinner; female, male, or nonbinary. He loved them in their age and in their youth, in their joy and in their sorrow, in their belief and in their unbelief. In Jesus's

name, we strive to offer that same blessing and welcome to all who wish to co-create the Beloved Community around this table and in the world.

Thanksgiving Prayer

One: God be with you!

Many: And also with you!

One: Lift up your hearts;

Many: We lift them up to God.

One: Let us thank God.

Many: It is good to thank God.

One: We thank you, Holy One, for loving the universe into being and giving yourself to all created things in love and faithfulness. Just as there is nowhere we can go where you cannot find us, there is nowhere where your love does not seek us out and hold us in a warm embrace. We thank you for Jesus, who in his life, his ministry, and in his death showed us the grace and love of your Way, a Way that calls us all to flatten systems of injustice and harm and usher in a Beloved Community in which all things are done on earth as in heaven. We ask now that you bless us, as we share the bread and cup, that your unbounded love might fill us and strengthen us to be powerful witnesses to your love in the world. As Jesus taught us, we pray:

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.

Communion

One: Jesus divided and shared bread with his friends, that whenever they did the same they might remember his unqualified love for them. We do so together today, that we might remember that same love is for us, too. (*The bread is divided.*) Take. The Bread of Life.

One: In the same manner, Jesus offered the blessing of the cup to all of his friends—even the ones who would shortly betray him. When we share the cup

together, we embrace that same radical grace and hospitality with love and hope for all our neighbors and all our futures. (*The cup is filled.*) Take. Drink. This is the Cup of the New Covenant.

You may hold the bread until all have been served. As the ushers distribute, we sing:

Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and nev - er be hun - gry.

Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.

When all have received bread:

One: This is the bread of life for the Body of Christ. Let all the people say:

Many: Amen! [*Eat.*]

You may hold the cup until all have been served. As the ushers distribute, we sing:

Eat this bread; drink this cup; come to me and never be hungry.

Eat this bread; drink this cup; trust in me and you will not thirst.

When all have received the cup:

One: This is the cup of blessing for the people of God. Let all the people say:

Many: Amen! [*Drink.*]

Prayer of Thanksgiving

One: Let us pray in gratitude.

Many: We thank you God, for feeding and restoring us at your Table. Thank you for your eternal love, Jesus who we know as the Bread of Life, who sustains us for the work of caring for your creation. May you continue to love us in our faithful acts and by that love discourage us from our unfaithful acts, that we might rejoice as your servants to the world. Amen.

* *Celebratory Refrain*

“Draw Us in the Spirit’s Tether” #337 (v. 3)

**All our meals and all our living make as sacraments of you,
that by caring, helping, giving, we may be disciples true.
Alleluia! Alleluia! We may serve with faith anew.**

* Benediction

Pastor Kelsey Renk

* 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.**

Offering – *collected as you leave the Sanctuary*

Postlude

Gideon Scheeler

*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.*

COFFEE HOUR IS SERVED AFTER WORSHIP!

Acknowledgements

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Sermon Text

I recently referenced the United Church of Christ General Synod of 2005, when the delegates famously—or infamously—declared their wholehearted support of same-sex marriage. But as I said a few weeks ago, marriage wasn’t the most controversial resolution passed that year; that honor—or dishonor—belonged to one titled, “Ministry Issues: Forming and Preparing Pastoral Leaders for God’s Church.” The essence of the resolution was a call to ordain people to Christian ministry outside of the traditional pathway of four years of undergraduate education and three years of seminary. Though a seven-year context was upheld, the resolution created a path to ordination for those who received theological training through regional lay-ministry programs, mentoring experiences, and even life experience.

I should say that this isn’t what we’ve done today. While Kelsey was for many years a “Member in Discernment,” a status for those on the road to ordination, she is no longer a MID. She is, however, now duly “Licensed” in our denomination, which means that she has been granted Authorization to administer

the sacraments and perform other ministerial duties in our specific local context (though we can send her out on our behalf elsewhere if we deem it prudent). So what we've done today isn't an ordination. She's not "the Reverend Kelsey Renk." She's "Pastor Kelsey," a no less important distinction for lacking the "Reverend" that comes with ordination.

I'm here today, among many other reasons, to impress upon you to understand that so far as I am concerned—and I think the Holy Spirit is with me on this (or vice versa)—that there should be no distinction between Reverend McArdle and Pastor Renk because of our differing titles. She does, in fact, have a four-year college education from the University of Minnesota and a three-year seminary degree from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. It's just that her life's trajectory hasn't yet placed her in a context where ordination is a thing. Licensure, yes; ordination, no.

But again, who cares? I mean, obviously some people do. My old Conference Minister from Nebraska told me that the 2005 Synod resolution had some strong opposition from the ranks of the ordained. I get it. Ordination has historically been a gateway thing. Across the church and in many places today, you simply couldn't get there unless you were a man, and a straight one, to boot (at least you had to pass for one). The first woman in the Church wasn't ordained until 1853 (and that was in one of our predecessor denominations). The first openly gay person to be ordained in a historic Protestant denomination, the Reverend Doctor Bill Johnson, was ordained in 1972 in the Golden Gate Association of the Northern California/Nevada Conference of the UCC. When women and LGBTQ+ folks have had to fight so hard to receive ordination, I can see how ordained folks in general might zealously play the gatekeeper.

But here's the thing about gates, according to Revelation and its vision of the New Jerusalem with its 12 gates (Rev 21:22-25, paraphrased): "I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is God and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the rulers of earth will enter in. **Its gates will never be shut by day**—and there will be no night there." In other words, we should always discern very deeply if we're going to guard the gates we build.

So here's the thing. I don't you to do as some pastors and churches do and make a distinction between Kelsey and me because she's Licensed and I'm ordained—because this I know is true. The most important piece of all of this is just this: is the person called to ministry? And where that is concerned, not an atom in my body hides a shred of doubt that Kelsey is called to be a minister and pastor. It doesn't matter whether she's in an "ordainable call" or working six hours or sixty. God has placed a call upon her heart to serve others with the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Calls come in many ways, and we respond to them with diversity. My call was what you can call a "classic" call experience where, like Samuel, I basically heard a voice calling to me in the night eighteen years ago this month. That voice—which came to me in the sound of my own voice, because who doesn't listen best to their own voice?—invited me to go to seminary, and at seminary I discerned that the call continued into parish ministry. Along the way, the Committee on Ministry and the Heartland Association of the Nebraska Conference agreed that I was called to ordained ministry. St. Luke's United Church of Christ thought so too, and they called me to be their pastor and teacher. Ordination unlocked.

Kelsey is called to ministry, too. Perhaps not unlike me, that first inkling of a call came in her own voice when she was an 18-year-old sitting in the pews of her home congregation, and at some point while Reverend Paul was preaching, she thought to herself, "Oh, I could do this." (Kelsey, when the thought entered my head, my response was, "Yeah, I could do that." Twinsies!)

Sometimes a call to ministry is experienced in a less mystical way, though no less profound, when it comes in the affirmations of others who observe that you have the gifts and graces for ministry, or even just character blessings that, when thought about later, totally lend themselves to ministry. Kelsey already knows some of her greatest joy in “helping people feel loved, cared for, and heard right where they are.” Her dream for this ministry is “to help folks feel a connection to their church community even, or maybe especially, when they aren’t able to physically be in the building.” And she indeed feels a sense of call to, eventually, enter into full-time chaplaincy. But this is the one I love: when I asked her how her friends would describe her, she asked her best friend to say so. That friend said, “She is welcoming and tries to include people in the fun. She will help you figure out what you think or feel without telling you how it should be.”

If that’s not a credential for ministry, I don’t know what is.

If that’s not one piece of a multi-faceted call to ministry, I don’t know what is.

I don’t want y’all to think I’m just talking about Kelsey, though. I’m supposed to preach the Good News—and the Good News is that God calls all manner of people into ministry, both within and beyond the confines of Authorized ministry in a church system. God calls people to ministries of care in their families, their jobs, their pastimes, their families-of-choice, and so much more. The Holy Spirit gives us each gifts according to our own. Indeed, Paul notes in his letter to the Romans, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (Romans 12:6ff).

Today, we acknowledge and celebrate the gifts given to Kelsey by the Holy Spirit, but we further celebrate our conviction that we are each of us so gifted. Perhaps some are called to be nurses or teachers. Others are called to the service industry or to other caring professions. Some may feel a sense of call to work in an office or even to answer phones. Some cook, some clean. Some may simply feel called to be the best human they can be and help others realize that potential, too. We are all called, every one. And that is indeed Good News. We each, in our own individual ways, have a chance to say, “Here I am, Lord. I will go if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.”

Today, Kelsey has answered that call in our presence and made a covenant of care with us and with God. Welcome her. Affirm her. Celebrate her gifts by building relationships with her as you may feel so called. Love her as your Minister of Visitation just as you have loved me as your Pastor and Teacher. She will love you in turn, and indeed already does.

God has blessed us all richly by bringing Kelsey into our midst. Let us be thankful and affirm that the Spirit has tethered us together with cords of love. God is today in our midst; alleluia!

Let all the people say, Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

Amen.

◆ **First Congregational Church UCC, Anoka, MN** ◆

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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.

Unison

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.
 2. I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.
 3. I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.

All who dwell in deepest sin my hand will save.
 I have wept for love of them, they turn away.
 I will set a feast for them, my hand will save.

I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.
 I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.
 Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied.

Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?
 I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?
 I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?

Harmony

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the

night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will

hold your people in my heart. heart.
 heart, in my heart.
 heart, in my heart.