



# First Congregational Church of Anoka United Church of Christ

*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

November 5, 2023 ♦ All Saints Day Observed



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

### Centering Music

“Pie Jesu” from *Requiem*

A. L. Webber; arr. Wagner

*Anoka UCC Bell Choir; Don Shier, Director*

### Silence

### \* Opening Hymn

“For All the Saints” (#299, vv. 1, 4,5)

*Congregation and Anoka UCC Bell Choir; Don Shier, Director*

*“For All the Saints” arranged for bells by Anna Laura Page*

**For all the saints who from their labors rest,  
who to the world their steadfast faith confessed,  
your name, O Jesus, be forever blessed. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Ringed by this cloud of witnesses divine,  
we feebly struggle, they in glory shine;  
yet in your love our faithful lives entwine. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,  
steals on the ear the distant triumph song,  
then hearts are brave again, and faith grows strong. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

### 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.*

*The children will help light candles for:*

Patti Kerschner ♦ Andrew Aaberg ♦ Tony Rohs ♦ Bob Gordon  
Susan Zakeer ♦ Ramoan Smith ♦ Paul Riley ♦ Jack Durst

*The king of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never;  
I nothing lack if I am his, and he is mine forever.  
Where streams of living water flow, my ransomed soul he leadeth,  
and where the verdant pastures grow, with food celestial feedeth.  
And so, through all the length of days, thy goodness faileth never.  
Good shepherd, may I sing thy praise within thy house forever.*

*(10:30) 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.*

### We Remember Those Who Have Died

One: Friends, the Gospels tell us the story of Jesus, the One who came in the name of our God. In his birth, life, death, and Resurrection he showed us that Love is stronger than death. Revelation speaks of a time when Death will be no more, when mourning and crying and pain will be no more. Though we anticipate the arrival of such a day, that day is not now. Death is still *an end*, if not *the end*, so we gather today in memory of those we love whose light is now harder for us to see. As we mourn their passing and acknowledge their lasting impact on our lives, let we who remain pray in gratitude for those who have died.

One: God be with you.

**Many: And also with you.**

One: God is indeed with us in all times and in every time, and God’s presence is perhaps no more needed than when we face the loss of a loved one to death. Today, we lean into the love of Christ as we remember our loved ones, acknowledge the grief that lies within us, and share our pain with God.

**Many: They are our parents, our siblings, our children, our friends, our neighbors. We remember them in love and affirm our conviction that they are now one with God in the great cloud of witnesses.**

One: We come to celebrate the life and ministry of these siblings in Christ, all dear to us, who were loved mightily in life and eternally in death by our Triune God, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit.

**Many: Through the lens of their lives we are better able to see the Realm of God, that place in which there is no longer young or old, Jew or Greek, slave or free. We commend them to God once again with honor and thanksgiving.**

One: Let us pray. God of the saints, in this very room we are surrounded by your Holy Spirit through whom we remain connected to our loved ones, the saints that live with you in eternity. In joy we lift up their names alongside yours. We thank them for their blessed service to you and to us and for the ways they continue to shape us. As we light candles for them, we know that in heaven and on earth they remain members of the Body of Christ.

**Many: We thank you, God, for the blessed memories we have of our loved ones. Let the candles in this room burn with the everlasting light that comes from you, the Light of Heaven, a light that is our guide, our beacon, and our shield in a world so often filled with struggle and sorrow. Fill us with awareness of the saints that surround us, both living and dead. Make us one with them and you in the ongoing dance of creation. Amen.**

One: In memory of those we have lost in the last year, we light these candles. In these flickering flames may we feel the presence of the Holy Spirit that surrounds us wherever we are. In our grief, in our joy, and in our wonder, may we be filled with a sense of God's steadfast love and care that keeps us in communion with all who have gone before.

*Music for Our Remembering*

"Be Still My Soul"

Sibelius; arr. Van Duker

*Piano, Nancy Benz; Cello, Mike Benz*

*During the music, you are invited to come to the front and light a candle in memory of a loved one. Return to your seat afterwards.*

One: We thank you, Holy One, that through the Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ we have received the assurance that death is not the final word. In glorious anticipation of the day when we will be reunited with our loved ones in your realm which knows no end, we pray to you in the familiar words taught to us by Jesus:

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.**

Scripture Reading - Matthew 27:50-54

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. <sup>51</sup> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. <sup>53</sup> After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup> Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

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

**Many: Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

Rev. Chris McArdle

We Come to the Table

One: The stories of Christ's death and resurrection remind us that death is not the end, but simply *an* end.

**Many: May it be so, O Author of Heaven!**

One: As we gather at this table in the manner ordained by Jesus, we remember all those who have died with whom we gathered around tables of love and joy.

**Many: May our memories of them sustain our spirits even as the food we shared sustained our bodies.**

One: We do this because Jesus is the Bread of Life, our lasting reminder that it is around tables that the world finds healing.

**Many: Come, Bread of Heaven! Come, Holy Spirit!**

*Singing:* "Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether" #337 (v. 1)

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

One: You are indeed among us, O Christ, and your Spirit connects us to each other in both life and death. The promise was implicit when you asked your friends to

remember you when they dined together: that you would be with them, always.

**Many: We remember you, O Jesus.**

One: In like manner, when we gather around tables and remember our loved ones who have died, we embrace our sometimes-wavering belief that they persist in this universe, even if in ways our mortal minds cannot fully grasp.

**Many: We remember you, dear ones.**

One: We give thanks, Holy One, for the comforting blessing of memory as we gather at this Table. May your Spirit abound and bless this bread and cup, that they may sustain us now as they so often do, bringing into our very bodies a taste of goodness and grace.

**Many: Come, Holy Spirit!**

*Singing:* “Draw Us in the Spirit’s Tether” #337 (v. 2)

**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.**

One: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, divided it and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

One: He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

One: This is the joyful feast enjoyed by the saints in heaven and on earth. Let us share in the bounty.

*Communion will be brought to you in the pews. **Please partake as you are served.***

*Bread and gluten-free crackers will be served in the first distribution.*

*Cups of juice and peel-and-eat wafer/juice will be served in the second distribution.*

*Music while Partaking*

Koki Sato

One: Let us pray in thanksgiving for the saints and for the food.

**Many: We thank you, Holy One, that your Spirit does not leave us bereft in the face of death. Though we cannot always affirm that the blessed dead remain with us, we are grateful for those moments in which we can say with conviction that, like Jesus, our loved ones are not fully gone. Let your Holy Spirit feed**

that conviction, inspiring us to care, help, and give even as our loved ones did.  
Amen.

*Singing:* “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.**

Offering

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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).  
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

\* Closing Hymn

“For All the Saints” #299 (vv. 1-3)

**For all the saints who from their labors rest,  
who to the world their steadfast faith confessed,  
your name, O Jesus, be forever blessed. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**You were their rock, their refuge, and their might:  
you, Christ, the hope that put their fears to flight;  
‘mid gloom and doubt, you were their one true light. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Still may your people, faithful, true, and bold,  
live as the saints who nobly fought of old,  
and share with them a glorious crown of gold. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

\* 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

## Acknowledgements

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The Communion liturgy was adapted from one written by the Rev. Scott A. Ressman and published in “Worship Ways” on ucc.org (2012).

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## Sermon Text

Did you all see the new *Doctor Who* themed Little Free Library that’s been planted outside? It’s due to the faithful and skilled work of Jim Overtoom, and he did a little something else that you may NOT have noticed: if you open the doors and look inside, gazing back out at you is a photograph of Dave Morse! For those who don’t know, Dave was a longtime member of the church and dear friend of the Overtooms. When I came to the church, he was a member of the Interim Steering Committee, the Search Committee, and the Membership Review Team (which he created). I will always remember the sight of him sitting back in the back in what I still call, “The Dave Morse Section.” Many more will remember him for his love of books, his donations to our library, and the way he could grow a pristine, white beard at the holidays and dress up as Santa Claus.

Like many of you, I long to see Dave again, but that’s not something we typically encounter here on earth, even on something fantastical like *Doctor Who*. In fact, there’s an episode where all of these ghostly silhouettes start appearing all over the earth. Perhaps people should be alarmed at the occurrence, but a mixture of longing and hope results in people convincing themselves that the ghosts are the returned souls of their loved ones, rather than an invasion. Isn’t that what we all want? A visit from those who have pierced the veil and gone ahead? To know that death may be an earthly end, but it isn’t an existential end?

I don’t profess to know what comes after this life, but I’m persuaded that there is *something*. I think Shakespeare had it right when he wrote, “There are more things in heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy”! That line always makes me think of a former co-worker named Kevin. One night, after Kevin and his wife had put their young son to bed, they heard the boy talking. It sounded like a conversation. When they went into the boy’s room to investigate, he told them that he had been talking to his grandfather, a man who had died before the boy was born. Then he proceeded to tell them accurate things about Grandpa that Kevin and his wife had never told them. More on earth, indeed, Hamlet.

In the Church, we are blessed with a foundational story that doesn’t so much pierce the veil as much as it tears the curtain, though we don’t always remember the Matthean part of the story where the zombies show up. I mean, of course, that bit about the tombs opening up and the dead rising from the grave to walk about Jerusalem and say howdy to their neighbors. I would imagine that most of us don’t read that story literally, though perhaps a Hollywood depiction of that unexpected event might be in order! Rather, we read it for its theological claims: that God is more powerful than Death. That Death is not the end of us. That there is more beyond this mortal, temporal, earthly life than we are usually able to perceive.

Science bears at least some of this out, you know. We persist, inasmuch as the Law of Conservation of Mass dictates that matter cannot be destroyed. Similarly, the Law of Conservation of Energy assures us that energy can’t be destroyed, either. What we are persists in this universe, if in altered forms. The

atoms of our loved ones are still flowing through the cosmos, experiencing existence in new ways. We live on.

Maybe we don't recognize the form life takes after a conventional, earthly death, except for when we do. For what are our memories of the dead if not the energetic imprint upon us left behind? Those who have died are still here, and though we cannot hold them in our arms, their imprint is indelible. You've probably experienced it just as I have; a smell, a sight, an action, a tactile sensation that momentarily transports you to a place where it's almost like they're still here, yes?

Whenever I go running up the stairs here at church, suddenly I'm above them, on the landing, watching Keith Graham ascend two steps at a time.

Whenever I stand in the shower and let water spray into my ear, I remember Leroy Mueller from my old church telling me that's how he would clean out his ear wax.

And now, when I open our Little Free Library, I'll see Dave in the TARDIS, but also in his room at Bridge Square, surrounded by overflowing bookshelves.

On this day on which we remember the saints, I pray that we will each know the comfort in our inherited beliefs that our loved ones are still with us, even if we can't touch them. May their memories burn like everlasting flames, keeping us warm when the cold of loneliness and rise up. And may we all, when it becomes our turn to skip lightly among the planets and stars, find ourselves enfolded once again not just in arms of Love, but in the arms of our loved ones.

Amen.

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

1923 Third Avenue, Anoka, MN 55303 ◆ (763) 421-3375

Pastor – Rev. Chris McArdle

Minister of Visitation – Pastor Kelsey Renk

Director of Health Ministries – Jessie Waks, NP

Director of Music Ministries – Don Shier

Keyboardist – Koki Sato

Moderator – Terja Larsen

Website: <http://www.uccanoka.org> ◆ Email: [office@uccanoka.org](mailto:office@uccanoka.org)

Text-to-Give: 844-334-1477



*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.*



