

**First Church**  
Middletown



**UNITED CHURCH**  
OF CHRIST



Sunday, January 22, 2023

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Rev. William Tanner, Candidating Sunday, First Church Middletown, CT

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**WE ARE A MASK POSITIVE COMMUNITY  
ANNOUNCEMENTS WILL BE SHARED FROM THE LECTERN  
ONLY.**

The Church is not an institution forcing us to follow rules but a community inviting us to still our hunger and thirst at its table.

**~Henri Nouwen**

Our vocation is not simply to be, but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny....

To work out our identity in God.

**~Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation**

WORDS OF WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE: *Star Rising* Erik Santos

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: One thing we have asked of God:

**All: To live in God's house all the days of our lives,  
to behold God's beauty, and to seek God together.**

One: "Come" says the heart, "Seek God's Face."

**All: It is God whom we seek.**

One: Now our heads are lifted up and we offer God our  
shouts of Joy!

**All: Let us sing and worship God!  
Amen.**

\*HYMN NCH 391: *In the Midst of New Dimensions*

NEW DIMENSIONS

UNISON PRAYER OF INVOCATION

**All: Creator God, architect of the heavens and weaver of the  
human heart, join us in worship today. Rest your hand upon  
us that we might find stillness, rest, and peace. Breathe Your  
Spirit into us that we might dream dreams and see visions  
worthy of Your kingdom and fit for Your purpose. Fill us with  
Your grace and courage to follow You, lead one another, and  
love our neighbor well. Amen.**

PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: "The Peace of Christ be with you."

**All: And also with you!**

ANTHEM *All That I am* William Himes

The Court Street Singers

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 43:19-21

*I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.*

*The wild animals will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches;  
for I give water in the  
wilderness, rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen  
people, the people whom I  
formed for myself so that they  
might declare my praise.*

Matthew 22:36-40

*When the Pharisees heard that  
[Jesus] had silenced the  
Sadducees, they gathered  
together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to  
test him. ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the  
greatest?’ He said to him, ‘ “You shall love the Lord your  
God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all  
your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And  
a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”  
On these two commandments hang all the law and the  
prophets.’*

**JESUS DIDN'T TURN PEOPLE AWAY. .**

Skeptic. Certain. Confident. Fearful. Gay.  
Straight. Bi. Married. Divorced. Single.  
Looking. Partnered. Female. Male.  
Trans. Queer. Cis. Non-binary. Saint.  
sinner. A little of both. Immigrant.  
Native. Citizen. Alien. Strong. Weak.  
Got-it-together. Lifelong screw-up.  
Addicted. Recovering. Convicted.  
Conflicted. Pacifist. Militarist. Idealist.  
Realist. Long-time member. Just walked  
in the door. Parent. Child. Housed.  
Homeless. Believer. Questioner.  
Questioning believer. Doubter. Sports  
junkie. Tree hugger. Geek. Cool kid.  
Loner. Rich. Poor. Just barely making it. .

**NEITHER DO WE.**

h/t to the Old South Church in Boston

BLESSING ON THE SCRIPTURE READING

SERMON

The Rev. William Tanner

\*HYMN NCH 539: *Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant*

SERVANT SONG

THE OFFERING OF GIFTS

OFFERTORY

*Old Hundreth*

Johann Pachelbel

DOXOLOGY Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God all creatures here below.

Praise God for all that love has done.

Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**God of abundance, all that we have belongs to you. We offer these gifts back to your service and dedicate them to Christ's vision of a world healed and God's kingdom raised up on Earth. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & PASTORAL PRAYER

OUR PRAYER CONCERNS

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father/Mother/God/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.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever.**

**Amen**

*\*HYMN NCH 400 Christ is Made the Sure Foundation*

REGENT SQUARE

BLESSING

RESPONSE

**Go out into the world in peace**

**Have courage**

**Hold onto what is good**

**Return no one evil for evil**

**Strengthen the faint-hearted**

**Support the weak**

**Help the suffering**

**Honor all persons**

**Love and serve the Lord**

**Rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen!**



POSTLUDE

*Minuet Gothique*

Leon Boellmann

Today's Worship Leaders

The Rev. William Tanner; Shari Lucas, Minister of Music