

**Gathering In Sunday
Living Into ... The Wrestling
September 24, 2023**



Image Jacob Wrestling God I by Chris Cook, chriscookartist.com

first  **congregational**
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
timeless worship + modern faith

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 24, 2023

10:00 am

"You have been given questions to which you cannot be given answers.

You will have to live them out - perhaps a little at a time."

"And how long is that going to take?"

"I don't know. As long as you live, perhaps."

"That could be a long time."

"I will tell you a further mystery," he said. "It may take longer.

~ from Wendell Berry's Jayber Crow

ANNOUNCEMENTS (9:50 am)

RINGING OF THE BELL (10:00 am)

WE ARE A NURTURING BELOVED COMMUNITY

WELCOME

Page

"You Are Welcome Here"

by Linda Allen

No mat-ter who you are, where you've tra - veled If
No mat-ter who you are, what name you choose The
If you feel loved, and long to share it If
all you've known has come un - rav-eled Are you tired? Too
miles you walked in some-one el - se's shoes Who you are, the
you feel lone-ly we'll help you bear it. If you are strong, strong
tired to bear it? We will walk with you, we will share it You are
work you do, Does not de-fine our care for you
as an oak tree If you're a ri - ver seeking my-ster - y
wel-come here, wel-come here You are wel-come here.

Words & music by Linda Allen, © 2021. Used with permission

*Rise in body or spirit

THE STORY

Sharon Benton

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Jen Sandoval

*Children may go with Josh to church school in the social hall
or remain in the sanctuary as they choose.*

MUSIC FOR CONTEMPLATION

Judy Widrig

*What do/have you wrestled with God about?
What have you wrestled with in your faith life?*

*COMMUNITY PRAYER

by John Howell

Jim Hollander

One: O God who is love, when you seem so far away from us,

**All: remind us to reach within, to the striving at the core of ourselves,
and there let us find you.**

One: When you seem so unconcerned, so massive, so impassive,
so insulated by your power, so distant by your expansiveness,

**All: remind us to reach out in seeking alongside each other,
and there let us find you.**

One: And in times when we seem to have nothing to strive for and
there is no one to touch,

**All: let us never close our hearts or our hands, but always,
let us be open to you.**

One: You know our uneasiness with the claims that faith makes upon our lives,
yet you enter with us into our struggle, and we know we are not alone.

We are thankful that your Spirit continues to push us in our search for truth.

**All: Encourage us to live the truth we find,
and guide us always to seek truth yet undiscovered. Amen.**



Faith - ful God, you have been our guide, year by year walk - ing
You have called us to be a light, sign of jus - tice and
God, what - ev - er the fu - ture holds, keep us faith - ful as



by our side, bless - ing chal - lenge and heal - ing strife,
truth and right. You have made us a rain - bow sign,
life un - folds. Write your cov - e - nant on our hearts;

Refrain



lead - ing us on the way of life. Faith - ful God of the
col - ors show - ing your peace de - sign. -
send the gift that your love im - parts.



liv - ing cov - e - nant, lead us on - ward in this new day.

by Ruth Duck, © 1996 The Pilgrim Press. Used under OneLicense #A-718199.

THE PRAYER OF JESUS

We invite you to use the language for God that is most comfortable for you:

"Our Creator," "Our Father" or "Our Mother."

Our 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 and ever. Amen.

*If you have a prayer request you'd like to share confidentially with our pastors,
have added to the confidential prayer list, or spoken aloud in worship,
go to www.fccb.net/contact-us/ to send a message or call the church to talk with a pastor.*

SUNG PRAYER

"Behold, Behold, I Make All Things New"

BEHOLD BEHOLD

The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and repetitive, with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: "Be - hold, be - hold, I make all things new, be - gin-ning with you and start - ing from to - day. Be - hold, be - hold, I make all things new, my prom-ise is true, for I am Christ, the way." The score ends with a double bar line.

Be - hold, be - hold, I make all things new, be -
gin-ning with you and start - ing from to - day. Be -
hold, be - hold, I make all things new, my
prom-ise is true, for I am Christ, the way.

Text: John L. Bell, b.1949

Tune: John L. Bell, b.1949

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WE ARE GROWING AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN FAITH

A READING FROM SCRIPTURE

Genesis 32:9-13, 22-31
Common English Bible

Jim Hollander

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

Jim Hollander

One: For the Word of God in scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us:

All: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

"Living Into ... the Wrestling"

Sharon Benton

MUSICAL REFLECTION "Faith Will Not Grow from Words Alone"

Chancel Choir

Words: Elizabeth J Smith (1956-) Tune: O WALY WALY

*Faith will not grow from words alone,
from proofs provided, scriptures known;
our faith must feel its way about,
and live with question marks and doubt.*

*Faith takes the little that we know,
and calls for hope, and tells us: Go!
Love and take courage, come what may;
Christ will be with us on the way.*

*The pattern Jesus showed, we share:
life comes through death, hope through despair.
God is made known in brokenness,
and faith feeds on God's emptiness.*

WE ARE LIVING CHRIST-INSPIRED ACTION

TESTIMONY

*SENDING SONG

"You Are Welcome Here"

Tune by Linda Allen. Words by Sharon Benton.

We have worshiped God

In our many ways

And now we go

Into the day

Go out from here

Both far and near

And bring the news So all may hear

You are welcome here...

In times of tears

and times of grace

We sought our God

here in this place

God gathered us

We know we're dear

Now we go out, but please be clear

You are welcome here...

*BENEDICTION

Page

POSTLUDE & SHARING

Judy Widrig

After the postlude we encourage you to share with someone your response to today's questions:

What do/have you wrestled with God about? What have you wrestled with in your faith life?



Offering plates are available near the doors as you leave;

thank you for your gift helping to build justice and compassion.

There are several other ways to give: 1) Give at our website, <https://fccb.net/giving/>.

2) Mail checks to First Congregational Church, 2401 Cornwall Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225.

3) Use the Breeze app. Download from your app store, set up an account, and give!

4) Give by text. Text a dollar amount to (360) 205-1297, and set up your account.

5) Scan the QR code above or on the back cover of the bulletin.

Open and Affirming (ONA): As an Open and Affirming congregation believing in a loving God, all people are welcome in this church without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, economic or social status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

We Try To Use Language which will help people feel included in our worship. Since not everyone is comfortable with the same language, we invite you to amend the words of the service as we sing and pray if they do not adequately express your faith. We invite you to assist us in creating new expressions of our common faith and life together.

Technical Support: If you need help streaming our worship services or connecting in other ways, please let us know.

APPOINTMENTS WITH PASTORAL STAFF

Pastoral staff are available by appointment virtually, or in person with masks. Contact them by email or call the pastoral care line, 360-733-4255.

Sharon **sharon@fccb.net**

Davi: On Sabbatical

You can also email our Office Manager
Cydne at **office@fccb.net**
and she'll pass your message on.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH United Church of Christ

An Open & Affirming Congregation

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24/7 Emergency Pastoral Care: 360-733-4255

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Facebook: facebook.com/fccbucc

Summer Office Hours: M-Th, 10:00 am-4:00 pm

LEAD PASTOR: Sharon Benton, she/her

PASTOR: Davi Weasley, they/them

SABBATICAL PASTOR: L Page, she/they

CHURCH SCHOOL COORDINATOR:

Josh Marchand, they/them

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Lucy Bledig, she/her

ORGANIST: Judy Widrig, she/her

ACCOUNTANT: Marinda Seholm, she/her

OFFICE MANAGER: Cydne Cochran, she/her

CUSTODIAN/MAINTENANCE:

Kurt Aagard, he/him

WORSHIP MEDIA COORDINATOR:

Georgia Drost, she/they

MODERATOR: Mark Schofield

VICE MODERATOR: Scott Ward, he/him

PAST MODERATOR: Beth Tyne

CLERK: Janet Malley, she/her

TREASURER: Craig Jennings

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