

## **The Gathering of a People of God**

*National Avenue is a brave place for all people. We celebrate our diversity of race, creed, religion, cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. We extend a warm welcome to all this morning, especially those who are worshipping at National Avenue for the first time. Your presence enriches us in this time of celebration together~*

### **Prelude**

#### **Words of Gathering**

**Connie Condict and Neil Guion**

Spirituality is an art form.

It is a creative process.

It has roots in tradition and culture,

but it grows organically in the soil of our unique life story.

Like artists,

we each put our signature on the expression of our personal vision.

What others see in us is the mystery of sorrows and surprises:

the art we call an ordinary life.

What is a first step on any spiritual journey?

Here is a suggestion: empathy.

**So much of spiritual life begins with the simple response of caring.**

What you are seeing and hearing makes a difference to you.

It matters.

You care.

Without this basic bond of empathy,

[stevencharleston]

the depth and durability of what follows may be uncertain.

**We gather in this space**

**to learn, grow, and share in this creative process.**

*Please stand as you are able in body or in spirit at the \* asterisks.*

#### **\*Gathering Hymn**

*Restless Weaver*

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#### **\*Lighting the Community Candle**

**Neil Guion**

In our anxiety we seek stability,

addicted to the status quo; it's an old habit.

When the kingdom is jolted

the army reacts, and the old order is restored.

Everyone plays their given part, or is replaced,

and the cycle continues.

Ancient wounds are maintained, pristine.

This is life in human community.

**But not in the Realm of God.**

The always predictable isn't always.

What is stable is shifted; everything is transformed.

Forgiveness destroys the old order.

Resurrection isn't return, but moving on.

Every moment, there is no going back.

The tectonic plates keep drifting.

**All that is, is becoming.**

Though it upsets the balance

and shocks the multitudes,

life keeps tipping toward grace.

No matter how permanent it seems,

everything is a chrysalis.

**Even you.**

[stevengarnaas-holmes]

### **The Candle of Christ is lit.**

In this light,

**we point to this moment burning in our midst to claim**

**a hope leading us onward.**

**May we go with courage.**

#### **\*Passing of the Peace**

**Connie Condict**

One reason I speak about fear is because fear is flexible.

You can close it off in one area only to have it emerge in another.

We can fear for our health,

our family,

our planet,

our future,

fear is everywhere.

But so is love.

**Love is everywhere.**

And love tames fear.

So we search for the places where we are afraid

in order to bring love to them,

and through love, confidence.

[stevencharleston]

*You are invited to share this ancient greeting with those seated near you. We are mindful each of us are at different levels of comfort, please honor those around you as you share peace. You are invited to turn to the camera and say hello to all worshipping with us online!*

#### **Life of the Church**

**Rev. Jenn Simmons**



*You are invited to sign in via check-in. If you would like to receive our weekly update by email or would like to schedule a time for coffee with our pastor, please provide that information on the form.*

#### **Reading the Sacred Story**

**Rev. Jody Furnas-Wright**

**From the Gospel according to John Chapter 15:9-17**

A reading to ground us in our tradition

**and spark our imaginations as co-creators**

**Amen.**

#### **Prayer of the Community**

**Tina Stillwell**

The one whose heart was broken for the people,

who, powerless, lifted up the powerless,

who, wounded, overthrew all shame and judgment

and stood against oppression,

who was rejected by shame and judgment

and crushed by oppression—the crucified one —

that one has been made new and whole.

The life that was laid down has been raised,

and given the power of infinite life.

Into this death we have been baptized,

and into this resurrection we have been raised.

This spirit is now in us; this love is now ours to steward.

Let us then live with that spirit,

with compassion, generosity, trust, and courage;

and lay down our lives that have already been raised up.

*We know that we have passed from death to life*

*because we love one another.*

[stevegarnass-holmes]

### **Silence**

Join with me:

**O presence and pow'r within us,**

**Being and Life of all.**

**How we are filled, how we o'erflow**

**with infinite love and gladness!**

**We shall this day sow grace and peace,**

**and show mercy to all,**

**and gentle loving-kindness.**

**And we shall be not so self-serving,**

**but a constant source of giving.**

**For ours is the essence, and the wholeness,**

**and the fullness forever.**

**Amen.**

[paulalanlaughlin]

#### **Music of Slowing Down**

*We Remember Them*

**LABARR**

**CHANCEL CHOIR**

#### **Reflection**

*Life After*

**Rev. Simmons**

#### **Music of Response**

*Sometimes God Begins a Project*

**507**

#### **Offering of Ourselves, Our Tithes & Our Gifts**



*You are invited to share offering via Paypal (using the QR code on the left) or in the plate as it is passed. We invite you to share your offerings of time, passion, energy, and resources. Thank you for investing in Spirituality, Justice, and Community as it comes to life at NACC.*

#### **Music of Reflection**

*Where the Light Begins*

**LABARR**

**CHANCEL CHOIR**

#### **\*Doxology**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God, the source of all our gifts!

Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!

Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

#### **Prayer of Gratitude**

**Deb Gallion**

**Sharing the Lord's Supper**  
with Revs. Jody Furnas-Wright and Jenn Simmons

**Elders & Deacons**

What I mean by 'god'  
is bread for everyone  
is shared rage at cruelty  
is attention where it is needed  
is grief held in community  
is blooming uninhibited  
is water flowing freely  
is children at ease  
is mystery and magic  
is how trustworthy the rising  
collective and determined,  
powered by love,  
rooted in truth,  
sharing in risk.

[mjadekaiser]

At this table, we live and practice love.

**We risk sharing love.**

A love that frees us  
from endless striving to be "one of the good ones."  
This love allows us to open into more honest  
and loving relationships.  
It allows us to be open to feedback.  
To own our mistakes.  
If we can really abide in this love,  
and live it out with one another,  
love frees each of us to address the sometimes,  
harmful impact of our behavior without fearing that we will be  
exiled from love and care.  
Real accountability—  
distinct from punishment—becomes possible. —

**Jesus, the liberator,**  
**gently invites us to this table to practice, live,**  
**and experience this love.**

Love that frees us. [adapt/nicholatorbett]

On the night he would be arrested,  
Jesus gathered his friends and companions.  
In the midst of a tense and dangerous time,  
they found each other at table,  
connecting over the story of God-enfleshed among them.  
And as they did so, Jesus took bread,  
gave thanks to God,  
broke the bread and shared it with his disciples saying,  
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you."  
**Do this in remembrance of me.**  
When the supper was over, he also took the cup,  
gave thanks to God, and shared it with his disciples, saying,  
"Drink from this, all of you;  
**this is the cup of the new covenant.**  
**Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.**"

And so we pray,  
**Come Holy Spirit, Breath of God, Renewer of life,**  
settle on these gifts and all who gather here,  
that we might be transformed in our remembrance  
of your radical love,  
your eternal embrace,  
and your grace  
that makes all things new. [enfleshedliturgyadapted]

**Prayer at the Table**

**Etta Madden**

**Sharing of the Bread and Cup**

*This morning we will receive communion by intinction. You are invited to come forward and to take a piece of bread, dip it in the cup, eat, and leave your toothpick in the bowl. The bread is gluten, nut, and dairy free so all may share at the table. If you would prefer a pre-packaged communion, remain seated and we will bring one to you. All are welcome to share at the table set by Jesus.*

**Communion Music**

**Musical Meditation**

**Sending Song**

*In Christ There Is No East or West*

**687**

**Words for the Journey**

Perhaps it does not begin.  
Perhaps it is always.  
Perhaps it takes a lifetime to open our eyes,  
to learn to see what has forever shimmered in front of us—  
the luminous line of the map in the dark,  
the vigil flame in the house of the heart  
the love so searing  
we cannot keep from singing,  
from crying out in testimony and praise.  
Perhaps this day will be the mountain  
over which the dawn breaks.  
Perhaps we will turn our face toward it,  
toward what has been always.  
Perhaps our eyes will finally open  
in ancient recognition,  
willingly dazzled, illuminated at last.  
Perhaps this day the light begins in us.  
May it be so.  
**May we make it so.**

[janrichardson]

**Postlude**

**National Avenue Christian Church**

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**Rev. Jody Furnas-Wright**, Adjunct Pastor for Faith Formation with Families  
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**Rohit Choudhary**, Technical Director | **Sarah Cybulski**, Finance Coordinator,  
**Rev. Dr. John White**, Theologian in Residence | **Jonathan Raney**, Music Director

# National Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



Images from the Desert by Jenn Simmons

**Unbelievable: Life after  
Death in a Pluralist World**  
**28 April 2024**