

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~

Welcome to worship

Prelude

Words of Gathering

John Mihalevich & Susan Mihalevich

We want to be honest.

And many of us have been lied to.

We have come bearing the deepest questions of our hearts.

Bring your questions.

They are welcome and wanted here.

We want to trust.

And many of us have been hurt by the very institutions that promised us love and care.

Bring your full self, hurts, broken trust, curiosity, hope, anger.

We come together just as we are.

With the promise that we will listen.

No judgement.

No need to fix.

No need to remake.

Just listen.

I will listen to you if you will listen to me.

In the ways of Jesus, we see one who showed us how to love.

How to meet each other where we are.

How to begin to reach out for trust.

So bring your questions, longings, and hopes, we will hold them together.

***Gathering Hymn Womb of All Life, Source of All Being #14**

***Lighting the Community Candle**

Take a deep breath as we hear a poem from the poet Jadine Lydia:
even though my path is unclear
i release all doubt and let go of my fear
i trust myself and i trust the divine
and know i'm always right on time;
i walk the path of love.

[Jadine Lydia]

The divine is in each of us.

She, him, them, is waiting, just light this light,
to shine forth love.

The Christ Candle is lit.

May this light center us and remind us

We are light.

We are meant to shine.

***Passing of the Peace**

Lord, Make Me a Channel of Disturbance:

The “Reverse St. Francis Prayer”

Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.
Where there is apathy, let me provoke;
Where there is compliance, let me bring questioning.
Where there is silence, may I be a voice.
Where there is too much comfort and too little action,
grant disruption.
Where there are doors closed and hearts locked,
Grant the willingness to listen.
When laws dictate and pain is overlooked...
When tradition speaks louder than need...
Grant that I may seek rather to do justice than to talk about it;
Disturb us, O Lord.
To be with, as well as for, the alienated;
To love the unlovable as well as the lovely;
Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

~Author Unknown

May the heart of disturbing peace be with you.

And also with you.

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. The QR code/link is in the pews. 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.

Reflecting on the Sacred Story
from the Gospel According to Matthew 3:11-17

We tell stories to learn, to grow, to spark more questions.

Today we offer the longings of our heart.

We join with the voices rising, from the past and from today.

We join the story.

Prayers of the Community

[a moment of centering]

A Prayer for the Tired, Angry Ones
God, We're so tired.
We want to do justice, but the work feels endless,
and the results look so small in our exhausted hands.
We want to love mercy, but our enemies are relentless,
and it feels like foolishness to prioritize gentleness
in this unbelievably cruel world.
We want to walk humbly, but self-promotion is seductive,
and we are afraid that if we don't look after ourselves,
no one else will.

We want to be kind, but our anger feels insatiable.
Jesus, in this never-ending wilderness,
come to us and grant us grace.
Grant us the courage to keep showing up to impossible battles,

trusting that it is our commitment to faithfulness,
and not our obsession with results, that will bring in Your peace.
Grant us the vulnerability to risk loving our difficult and complicated
neighbor, rejecting the lie that some people
are made more in the image of God than others.

Grant us the humility of a de-centered but Beloved self.

As we continue to take the single step that is in front of us, Jesus,
keep us from becoming what we are called to transform.
Protect us from using the empire's violence—in our words,
in our theology, in our activism, and in our politics—
for Your kingdom of peace.

Keep our anger from becoming mean-ness.

Keep our sorrow from collapsing into self-pity.

Keep our hearts soft enough to keep breaking.

Keep our outrage turned towards justice, not cruelty.

Remind us that all of this, every bit of it, is for love.

Keep us fiercely kind.

Amen

[Laura Jean Truman]

Reflecting in Song O God of Love, This is a Time of Turning
FINLANDIA ("Be Still, My Soul")

O God of love, this is a time of turning—

a time of change, with conflict in the news.

For in our land, some mighty winds are churning;

There's much at stake that we could gain or lose.

Love sings out strong, yet fires of hate are burning;

O God of all, you call us all to choose.

O God of peace, we hear your gracious promise:

Your love can heal the hearts of humankind.

May we stand firm for truth and peace and justice;

May we leave fear and hatred far behind.

May we sing out, and — singing— be a witness,
and show resolve to work for what is kind.

O God of all, of immigrant and neighbor,
of those in power—and of the refugee,
You give us all our common life and labor—
our common hope, the peace we long to see.
God, may we turn and be made strong together.
May we seek justice, love and unity.

O God of love, have mercy on your churches;
Take from our hearts our paralyzing fear.
Give us new faith! Make us courageous workers.
Help us to labor on from year to year
When other voices call out to distract us,
May we choose well and seek your kingdom here.

Reflection Be Still & Know You are Good

Music to Reflect

Trust

CHANCEL CHOIR

Rev. Simmons

FETTKE

Offering of Ourselves

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.

Musical Gift

Do Not Be Afraid
CHANCEL QUARTET

STOPFORD

* 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

Invitation to the Table & Sharing the Lord's Supper with Rev. Simmons & Ashley Quinn, Elders & Deacons

We want to show up and say YES!

The world is chaotic.
The world is challenging.
Our community needs us.
We see visions of justice.
We have hope to build structures where everyone can thrive.
It is possible.
The way of Jesus, the way of Love, is possible.

Discerning what is ours to do means that sometimes we need to say no.
Or, not yet.
Or, that's not mine.
We need each other to help us find our way.

At this table we find room, space, questions, openness.
We find each other.
Jesus set tables throughout his ministry.
There were places people could show up exactly as they are.
At the table they were reminded,
Here you are seen.
Here you are valued.
Here you are supported.
We have been claimed as good.
God calls us good.

Not because of what we do,
we simply are,
good.

We come to this table as a community striving
for the "Right Yes" in a chaotic world.
We remember that on the night of his arrest—
a time of confusion and betrayal—
Jesus gathered with his friends. He knew they would need each other.
He took the bread, and after blessing it, he broke it, and gave it to them,
saying:
"Take and eat; this is my body, broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of me."

The breaking of the bread reminds us that when we feel broken, isolated, or unsure of our path, we find wholeness in community.

We need each other to help discern our "yes."

Then, after supper, he took the cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them, saying:

"This cup is the new covenant in my love.

Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me."

The cup is a sign of a new way of living—a covenant of radical, disruptive love.

It is the promise that the way of justice, courage, and love, is possible, but not alone.

We need each other to build and strengthen that world.

This is the table where everyone is seen, valued, and supported.

Let us remember, let us connect, and let us be nourished.

Prayer at the Table

Doug Steere

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.

Sending Song

O For A World

#683

Words for the Journey

Jeremiah said, "I am only a boy".

Moses said, "Who am I to do this work?"

Mary said, "How can this be?"

We often say, "But God, I am afraid."

**Even when we are afraid,
God invites us closer.**

So may we trust the Inviter.

May we heed God's invitation.

May we summon our courage and sing God's praise as we leave this place.

Let us go out in courage,
trusting the inviting, calling God.

May it be so.

National Avenue Christian Church

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John Scroggins, Board Moderator

Deb Gallion, Claudia Brown-Jackson, Susan & John Mihalevich, Elders

Lexi Amos, Chris Brown, Jill Wait, Deacons

National Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



**Pause: The Art of a Right
Yes**
Listening to Ourselves
18 January 2025