



Acton Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

No matter who you are, whom you love, or wherever you may be on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here. Thank you for joining us!



Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 19, 2021
9:30 a.m.

SEEKING TO LIVE GOD'S LOVE

◆ **GATHERING**

*The beginning of the prelude is a call to silent, personal preparation
for the worship of God.*

PRELUDE "Fugue in E Flat" —J.S. Bach
(the St. Anne)

TOLLING OF THE BELL Richard Skaggs

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS Mark Lauritano

INTROIT "Lord Jesus Christ, be present now" —J.S. Bach

BLESSING OF THE CHILDREN Charlotte Brewer

PRAYER OF THE DAY Rev. Paulo França

Holy Spirit of God, we thank you for all whose lives have been touched by your love and, today, come together to worship you with open hearts and open minds. Circle us with your grace. Remind us of our calling to follow Christ. Forgive us when we forget that we have accepted the invitation and responsibility to be Christians not only through our words, but especially through our actions. Draw us once again into the story of hope and love that nurtures our faith. Give us the strength to let your Word inspire us to become humble in heart, respectful listeners, truth-tellers, protectors of nature, makers of peace, friends of all who thirst for justice and faithful believers. Holy Spirit of God, bless us, and make of our lives the nourishment for all who are hungry for meaning, for gladness, for acceptance, for life, and for the liberating love of Christ. Amen.

*HYMN #355 "Lord, You Give the Great Commission " —(vv. 1, 4-5)

** indicates an invitation to stand.*

Lord, you give the great commission: "Heal the sick and preach the word."
Lest the church neglect its mission, and the gospel go unheard,
Help us witness to your purpose with renewed integrity.
With the Spirit's gifts empower us for the work of ministry.

Lord, you show us love's true measure: "Father, what they do, forgive."
Yet we hoard as private treasure all that you so freely give,
May your care and mercy lead us to a just society.
With the Spirit's gifts empower us for the work of ministry.

Lord, you bless with words assuring: "I am with you to the end."
Faith and hope and love restoring, may we serve as you intend
And, amid the cares that claim us, hold in mind eternity.
With the Spirit's gifts empower us for the work of ministry.

NEW MEMBERS

Halley Suitt Tucker
Jennifer & Ryan Salvas

MOMENT FOR STEWARDSHIP

Grif Resor

◆ LISTENING

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

James 3:13-4:8

Mark Lauritano

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵ Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶ For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

4 Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ² You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers! Do you not

know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, “God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? ⁶ But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says,

“God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble.”

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

CHORAL RESPONSE

“Let the words of my mouth”

—Pip Moss

Mark 9:30-37

Rev. Paulo França

³⁰ They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; ³¹ for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” ³² But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

³³ Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” ³⁴ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. ³⁵ He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶ Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

SERMON

“We All Fail When We Fail to Try ”

Rev. Paulo França

◆ RESPONDING

CHOIR ANTHEM

"Two Dwellings"

—Jane Marshall

[Lord, thou hast told us that there be two dwellings which belong to thee, and those two, that's the wonder, are far asunder. The one the highest heaven is, the mansions of eternal bliss; the other's the contrite and humble spirit. Though heaven be high, the gate is low, and he that comes in there must bow; the lofty looks shall ne'er have entrance there. O God, since thou delight'st to rest within the humble, contrite breast, first make me so to be, then dwell with me.]

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Rev. Andrew Harris

THE LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father, 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 sins,
as we forgive those who have sinned against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever. Amen.*

PRAYER RESPONSE

Senior Choir

OFFERTORY

Rev. Andrew Harris

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

"Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" —arr. Ricky Lombardo

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, Praise God, all creatures here below; Praise God above, ye heavenly host: Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Rev. Andrew Harris

*HYMN #405

"Give to Me, Lord, a Thankful Heart"

(vv. 1-2, 4)

Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart and a discerning mind;
Give, as I play the Christian's part, the strength to finish what I start
And act on what I find.

When, in the rush of days, my will is habit-bound and slow,
Help me to keep in vision still what love and power and peace can fill
A life that trusts in you.

Jesus, with all your church I long to see your kingdom come:
Show me your way of righting wrong and turning sorrow into song
Until you bring me home.

*BENEDICTION

Rev. Paulo França

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

Senior Choir

POSTLUDE

"Jesus, My Joy"

—Bach

Worship Leaders:

Rev. Paulo França, Senior Minister
Rev. Andrew Harris, Associate Minister
Charlotte Brewer, Dir. of Family Ministries

Music Today:

Elizabeth Carley, Organist
Pip Moss, Senior Choir Director
Barbara Skaggs and Elaine Olmstead,
Flutists

Welcoming Deacon:

Mark Lauritano

Trustee of Day:

Linda VanEmburch

Video Team:

Milan Chytil

Bell-Ringer:

Richard Skaggs

Stay in touch! Receive the latest updates from Acton Congregational Church in your inbox every Wednesday. Sign up for our electronic news at tracy@actonc.org.

***You may also visit our website at www.actonc.org.
Click on "News & Calendar" to find all the most recent issues of the E-news.***

If you are interested in receiving confidential prayer with our prayer team via Zoom after the service, you will find the link in your most recent email.

Join us for virtual Coffee Hour following the service. You will find the link in your most recent email. The Trustees have postponed their forum that was scheduled during coffee hour today.

Visit our website at www.actonc.org for our current announcements and news, or refer to the most recent E-news.

If you are a visitor and would like to be added to our weekly email, please contact the church office at 978-263-2728.

Music Note

Today's Prelude, "Fugue in E Flat" (the St. Anne) is a Trinitarian piece. Written in three flats and in three sections, the piece presents: God the Father in the first rather austere section; God the Son as a busy, living Person in the second section; and God the Holy Spirit in the third section, with the theme in the pedals and the "rushing wind" of the Holy Spirit in the manuals. Bach often wrote on his compositions "Soli Deo Gloria" (to God alone be the glory).



Today's Flowers

The flowers on the Communion Table are given by Pam and Griff Resor in gratitude for all the prayers, thoughts and notes they received during Griff's surgery and recovery

Sanctuary Banners

The banners on both sides of the focal point are the creative efforts of 4 A+ elves in our congregation, whose creative "gifts of the body" worked together this summer to enliven our sanctuary as we return to in-person worship.

Update from Cornerstone Thrift Shop!

The Thrift Shop is planning to open for business on October 4! We need your help to get ready to reopen. We are seeking donations of 30-gallon trash bags, tall kitchen trash bags, masking tape, Scotch tape, and black markers or Sharpies. These donations can be left outside the sorting room door, or in the red bucket at the church entrance.

Cornerstone is now accepting donations **by appointment ONLY!** To sign up for an appointment, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/sw2rvky2>. Masks and social distancing will be required for all interaction with our volunteers. If you need assistance in signing up to make an appointment, call the church office at 978-263-2728.

OUR YEAR with JESUS

HOMEBREWED CHRISTIANITY GUIDE TO JESUS: LORD, LIAR, LUNATIC... OR AWESOME? by Tripp Fuller - **Wednesday, Sept. 22 at 7pm, via Zoom.**

Fall Wednesday Bible Study

Our Fall Bible study meets on Wednesdays at 2:00pm on Zoom. We will discuss what makes a prophet, the unique messages of each, as well as their similarities. Whether you've read the prophets before or if this will be your first time, there are many gifts contained within these pages to fill your spirits and inspire your minds. Please email Rev. Andrew if you'd like to receive the zoom link each week along with the scripture passage for study. 9/22 - Amos, 9/29 - Hosea, 10/6 - Isaiah, 10/13 - Micah, 10/20 - Jeremiah, 10/27 - Ezekiel, 11/3 - Habakkuk, 11/10 - Second Isaiah, 11/17 - "What is a prophet again?"

Tuesday Book Discussion

The Book Discussion Group has resumed. A small group has been getting together on Zoom to discuss novels that have spiritual or theological themes. All are welcome to join the discussion of any book. No long-term commitment is required. We do ask that you read the book before joining the discussion. The tentative date for the next book discussion is Tuesday, October 19, at 10 AM. Please refer to the most recent E-news for all details.

Church Calendar/Zoom Requests

The office is working on updating the calendar for the new program year. Please submit all requests for upcoming events and meetings to the office. You may also request a Zoom time through the office. Please forward all requests to Tracy (tracy@actonc.org) with a copy to Katie (katie@actonc.org), or you may call the office at 978-263-2728

'Walk n Wonder' Walking Group

Join us for walking in nature and fellowship on Thursday mornings from 8:30—9:30am. The walk concludes with a prayer. The trail of the week will be emailed to those who are on the mailing list on Tuesday. For more information, please contact Kyoko Loverin at kyoko.loverin@gmail.com.

Emergency Contact

Should you have a pastoral emergency, you may now leave a voicemail on the main mailbox at the church number, 978-263-2728. The church recently upgraded to a new phone system that allows all voicemail messages to be automatically forwarded to the ministers by email. A Minister will promptly return your call.

Office Hours

The church office is open Monday - Friday 9am-4pm