



## St. Paul's United Church of Christ

Integrity of Creation Sunday | April 25, 2021 | 10:30 a.m.

*Honoring the Connections Between Climate Justice and Food Justice*

We offer this service as an opportunity for personal and communal theological reflection around climate and food justice, as part of our congregation's own faith journey and in this time of pandemic. This is sacred space for gratitude, grief, and hope through stillness, words, and song. Please read the section titled About Food Justice and Our Sacred Circle at the end of the bulletin for more information about this service.

**Prelude**

There Is a Balm in Gilead

arr. Pam Gervais

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*Welcome*

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Welcome by Rev. Sarah Brouwer, St. Paul's United Church of Christ

**Reader 4:** Introduction to the Sacred Circle

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*Gathering Within Ourselves & Bringing Our Truth Forward*

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**Rev. Sarah Brouwer:** Today's worship is framed by a pair of biblical texts. The first is from Genesis 1 and highlights several verses in this creation account. (Genesis 1: 1, 11-12, 29-31, linking verses abridged.)

**Reader 4:** As we begin this Sacred Circle, we invite you to find a comfortable seating position and allow yourself to settle in — both to your space and to your Self. Let the opening music bring you into touch with our Circle themes: climate crisis and food justice. Were we gathered outside, the chairs would be set up in a circle on the church lawn, with four aisles marking the four cardinal directions and the four sections of chairs echoing the four ancient elements: water, earth, air, and fire. Each section would be denoted by a brightly colored banner blowing in the breeze. You'll need to imagine all this today, but by this symbolism we mean to embrace the whole of creation in this Sacred Circle. We have brought the four colorful streamers representing the elements out today and have set them up front.

**Rev. Sarah Brouwer:** We invite you to use this quiet time to listen to your own heart. In the face of global climate crisis — thinking particularly today about the ground from which our food comes, and the water and the weather and all the labor that brings food to us — what grief do you carry? What fears do you harbor? What hopes do you hold — confidently or desperately? We find our strength in authenticity. May this gathering time be space where your deepest truths can emerge. As the singing bowl sounds and the music plays, we invite you to write just a couple words or short phrases that carry your grief, fear, or hope right below in this worship folder. This simple act helps bring these words of witness from your heart to this place. In fact, the streamers up front carry the thoughts written on them by those who participated in the first Sacred Circle.

### **Gathering Music for Reflection**

Wakantanka Taku Nitawa (Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works) Dakota Hymn

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### *Coming from Gratitude*

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**Reader #1:** Please hold the griefs, fears, and hopes that rose with you *among all of us* during this service. The holy work that we are doing, we are doing *together*.

**Reader #2:** Whatever we must face — and as the climate crisis deepens, there is SO MUCH we must face — whatever we must face, we will face it with more grace and more steady determination if we come from gratitude.

### *Gratitude for Water*

**Reader #1:** In our tradition, God — whom we see as the spark of creation for the cosmos — moved over the waters, imagining all that might be. And in Christian baptism — as well as many other faith traditions — water carries the promise of cleansing, renewal, and new life ...

**ALL:** Water is also precious in our daily lives: from the rain that nourishes the ground so that it might provide food, to the water that refreshes us, bathes us, and fills our bodies, to the soothing sound of waves on the beach, rain on leaves, or a stream over rocks ...

**Reader #2:** We name the water that brings the soil to life — and then moves from root to trunk to limb to leaf and finally to flower, vegetable, or fruit — that ultimately rejoins the air to become cloud and rain in an endless pilgrimage across this wondrous sphere ... For these watery things and more ...

**ALL:** We say Thank You.

## *Gratitude for Fire*

**Reader #1:** We imagine a blazing God, the sacred energy of the Big Bang, creating all the elements in the womb of that cosmic fire. Fire became the symbol for the Christian Pentecost, as tongues of flame danced on disciples' heads, announcing that God's love danced to all corners of the world ...

**ALL:** Fire is also precious in our daily lives, providing the warmth we need and the energy that helps us work.

**Reader #2:** And we name the fire in the sky that feeds sunlight to plants so they grow, the fire that allows us to bake and cook our food, and the fire of the microbes in our gut as they turn the food we eat into the energy our bodies can use ... For these fiery things and more ...

**ALL:** We say Thank You.

## *Gratitude for Air*

**Reader #1:** We call God Spirit, a Holy Wind, named in countless ways by people across time and place. Wind itself hints at this unseen sacred energy swirling in our midst. Indeed, wrapping this fragile planet in an atmosphere, invisible but essential to foster and sustain life ...

**ALL:** Air is precious as well in our daily lives: as the breath that fills our lungs — again and again and again. But also as the *same breath* that moves between *all that lives*, joining us to a vast community of persons, animals, and plants ...

**Reader #2:** We name with humility how the atmosphere freely — as an act of sheer grace — provides the CO<sub>2</sub> that plants need for their growth, and how air moves within soil itself sustaining organisms that keep the soil healthy and promote good growth from below ... For these airy things and more ...

**ALL:** We say Thank You.

## *Gratitude for Earth*

**Reader #1:** Judeo-Christian scripture tells us we were birthed from Earth itself: humus filled with holy breath and made humus beings. It tells us, too, that Earth is home to *all* creatures, hinting at the kinship we share with all ...

**ALL:** Earth, too, is precious in our daily lives: from the ground that holds us, to the fields that feed us, to the grandeur of mountain peaks and the subtler beauty of rolling hills ...

**Reader #2:** We name with wonder the boundless and unseen community of creation, that in a single teaspoon of healthy soil there are more microbes than all of the people alive today — and in a mere handful of good soil there are more living organisms than all the people who have ever lived. To say we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses is such understatement ... For these earthy things and more ...

**ALL:** We say Thank You.

Hymn

I'm an Earth Being

BUNESSAN (Morning Has Broken)

Born of this planet, I'm an Earth being,  
Born of this planet, I'm an Earth child.  
One with all beings, born of this planet,  
I'm an Earth being, one with the wild.

Born of this planet, baptized with moisture,  
I'm an Earth being, blessed by her rains;  
Rising from oceans, flowing through rivers,  
Earth's sacred waters pulse through my veins.

Born of this planet, flowing with breezes,  
Children inhale Earth's infinite breath;  
Earth's holy breathing enters my body,  
Creating a presence deeper than death.

Born of this planet, one speck of stardust,  
We feel the pulsing deep in our soul,  
Myst'ry like music throbs in the landscape,  
Earth like a mother, makes our lives whole.

*A Time for Young People*

Earthwise Milestone

An Invitation to Express Our Gratitude

Offertory Hymn

For the Beauty of the Earth by Conrad Kocher | arr. Chuck Bell  
Kristin Morant, vocalist | Steve Swanson, piano

For the beauty of the earth,  
for the glory of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and around us lies.  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
this, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale and tree and flower,  
sun and moon and stars of light,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
this, our hymn of grateful praise.

For thyself, best Gift Divine,  
to the world so freely given,  
for that great, great love of thine,  
peace on earth and joy in heaven.  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
this, our hymn of grateful praise.

Prayer of Dedication | Seed Blessing

**Reader #4:** God of both the first and the final Garden, receive these gifts, as seeds to be sown in loving service in your world. Let us plant them and tend them with care: inch by inch and row by row. In Christ's risen name we pray. Amen.

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## *Honoring the Pain of the World*

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**Reader #3:** However much we might prefer to rush forward into action — or however much we might feel caught in despair — there is power that comes by honoring the truth, the depth of Earth's pain. If we pause to honor it, we can begin the healing needed in this moment. Such pain might easily overwhelm us as individuals, but in this Sacred Circle we are gathered in shared purpose, whether in person or joining from other places. Here, if only for a few moments, we can dare to bear some of Earth's pain ... together.

**Reader #4:** And as we do this, we recognize that the *same choice* to exploit some facet of the wondrous world is behind the climate crisis, the depletion of healthy soil, and white supremacy. Industrial capitalism arose on the backs of slavery and colonization, the rampant use of fossil fuels and other raw materials, and the transformation of thriving ecosystems into food factories requiring ever more inputs of artificial fertilizers and pesticides. The patterns of growth and consumption that threaten planetary systems today are interwoven with racism. The pain of the world includes them both.

**ALL: So we honor the pain of the Water ...**

**Reader #3:** We remember ice caps that melt and oceans that warm, becoming less hospitable to life. We lament the water that roils in hurricanes, overwhelms in floods, and rises along coastlines. We confess that here, too, the poor around the globe will be hit hardest by the pain of the Water even though their lives have contributed to this pain the least ...

**Reader #4:** And we recognize the extent to which fertilizer runoff, chemical spills, plastic pollution, discarded fishing gear, and overfishing threaten individual species and the integrity of entire ecosystems by spawning dead zones, red tides, and physical hazards ...

**ALL: So we honor the pain of Fire ...**

**Reader #3:** We recall the wildfires that destroy both forest and communities. We lament the wanton burning of rainforests. And we grieve for the truth spoken so loudly now by our youth, that Planet Earth, *our very home* is on fire.

**Reader #4:** And we acknowledge that since global temperature records have been kept, beginning in 1880, all 20 of the hottest years on record have occurred in just the last 23 years, disrupting crop growth and livestock wellbeing ...

**ALL: So we honor the pain of the Air ...**

**Reader #3:** We remember the emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that make our atmosphere betray its own life-sustaining properties. We confess that the first — and worst — effects of climate change are falling on those least responsible and least able to respond to them. We lament that our heating planet creates conflict between and within nations, such that despite our common breath, we seem to breathe fear and hatred instead.



**Reader #2:** *This is the work of Active Hope. We begin in gratitude. We acknowledge deep pain. We feel our ability to rise. Together. And we go forth in action.*

**Reader #1:** Inspired by those who have struggled so long before us, from those who farmed the land with love ... to those who plumb Earth's wisdom to chart the course to our future —

**Reader #2:** In the company of those who grow food with care for both soil and creature ... and alongside those who work to make healthy food available to all —

**ALL:** **We, too, pledge to take up our places ... to do what we can to address these twinned crises of climate and food justice.**

**Reader #1:** By facing hard truths about our world and ourselves ... by taking actions in our own lives and building community with others ... by pressing our political leaders and together challenging the way things are —

**ALL:** **And doing all these things as though our lives depend on it.**

**Reader #2:** Because they do.

**Reader #1:** Our struggle is *one shared struggle*. Just as the meal we share in Jesus' name is called Holy Communion, so are we *entangled in everything that is*: rocks and stones, plants and trees, waves and wind, plankton and whales, and one another: *a feast of holy communion all around us*.

**Reader #2:** And here is the promise of Active Hope. Known also as "the work that reconnects," Active Hope echoes that truth found in every great faith tradition: that in seeking the wellbeing of others ... *all others* ...

**Reader #1:** ... we find the deepest joy ... the greatest hope ... the highest sense of purpose ... and the richest human life —

**ALL:** **As together we rise.**

Hymn

As the Turn of the World Draws Near

STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN  
words by David R. Weiss

From the diving loon with its haunting tune  
to the frogs that are chirping shrill  
while the walleye leap and the shy lynx creep  
and the bears in their caves sleep still.  
The tall pines sway and the foxes play  
and the rice rises wild in lakes,  
Fill our hearts with song, that we, too, belong  
Rouse our souls so we're wide awake

The day is bright, and the time is right as the dark of the night is clear  
That we now uprise from the ground to the skies as the turn of the world draws near.

But the weather's fraught and the climate caught  
and the fabric of life's undone.  
As the earth cries out in an anguished shout  
'neath the glare of a blis'tring sun.

The ocean spray voices loud dismay  
and the heavens for mercy plead.  
Give us hearts to hold all the pain now told  
And to follow where it may lead.

The day is bright, and the time is right as the dark of the night is clear  
That we now arise from the ground to the skies as the turn of the world draws near.

As our children yearn for the world to turn  
and the poor seek a just new day  
Though the time is late, let us turn back fate  
Let our hope rise without delay.  
To turn the world t'ward a day unfurled  
Make a-mends with this fragile dome  
Wrap our prayers in flesh, keep our courage fresh,  
Give us hope for our only home.

The day is bright, and the time is right as the dark of the night is clear  
That we now arise from the ground to the skies as the turn of the world draws near.

The day is bright, and the time is right as the dark of the night is clear  
That we now arise from the ground to the skies as the turn of the world draws near.

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## *Sending*

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**Rev. Sarah Brouwer:** Our ending text is from Revelation, chapter 21. (Selected verses: 1, 3, 5, 7, 10-11, 22-26)

**Reader 3:** As we gather today, the climate crisis looms larger than ever, including the threat posed by it to the ground beneath our feet and the food we eat. Moreover, the ongoing pandemic makes us keenly aware of how fragile our lives and our cities are. Yet we want to send you forth with fresh conviction about the world's value and beauty. With deepened awareness of the world's pain. And with a renewed sense of our place *together* in this moment. Last fall as a congregation we adopted a Creation Justice Covenant as one step in becoming a Creation Justice Church. This morning we invite you to join in affirming this covenant:

**ALL:**

In gratitude for all of creation, which supports and nourishes us in body and spirit —  
In grief for damage inflicted on vital ecosystems, for the loss of innumerable species,  
and for the suffering of people in our community and around the world —

We confess that our way of life is deeply entangled with exploitation; that how we get our food  
and shelter, how we move through our days, and how we fill our time depend on practices  
that harm the most vulnerable people and places.

We recognize that our relationships with land and water, our sibling species, and our fellow  
human beings are deeply broken, and that this reflects a fracture in our relationship to  
the Creator of us all.

Yet we dare to imagine a way of life that heals rather than harms. Where care and community come before endless seeking for individual gain. Where we find riches in each other instead of in things. This is God's Kin-dom.

We therefore commit ourselves to repairing our relationships with all of creation. We commit to working for the end of practices and systems that exploit the Earth, her creatures, and her people. We commit to building new ways of seeing and new ways of being.

We begin this work in our own congregation. We will attune ourselves in worship and prayer to gratitude and grief for creation. We will educate ourselves and each other about the damage being done to land, water, air, creatures, and communities and the systems causing harm. We will adopt practices in our building, on our grounds, and in our homes and lives that lessen harm and begin healing.

Yet the call to co-create God's Kin-dom is too wonderful, too vast, and too urgent to keep to ourselves. We will work with others to take the vision beyond our walls and into our community. We will build partnerships to break down harmful systems. We will give voice to the voiceless, that their stories and needs may be heard.

Together we will journey toward deeper faith, justice, and love for all creation.

**Rev. Sarah Brouwer:** As we conclude our Sacred Circle, we invite you to look slowly around and let your eyes meet other eyes as you offer a sign of peace and hope with one another. And take a moment to receive back that wave of peace coming to you from others who are gathered with us. Thank you for being here with us. Let us live — more than ever — with gratitude, grief, hope, and peace. For together we rise. Amen.

Postlude

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

arr. Calvin Taylor

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St. Paul's United Church of Christ

900 Summit Avenue | Saint Paul, MN 55105 | [www.spuconsummit.org](http://www.spuconsummit.org)

*We are both a Creation Justice Church and an Open and Affirming Congregation*

Prayers for Wellbeing | Body, Mind, Heart & Soul

Please keep Elif McCain in your prayers as she undergoes back surgery on Monday.

**Pastoral Care**

For pastoral matters, please contact Rev. Sarah Brouwer (612-750-1782).

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## Sacred Circle Service Credits & Participants

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Sacred Circle for Our Climate originally conceived in 2019 by Deb George, Kate Hansen, Tracy Kugler, Donna Olson, Tracie Olson Payne, Bruce Tyler, and David Weiss

Liturgy for our Sacred Circle — written by David Weiss

Gathering Music (Dakota Hymn) permission through OneLicense.net License #A-723800

I'm an Earth Being — words by Norman Habel © 2010 ([www.seasonofcreation.com/creation-songs](http://www.seasonofcreation.com/creation-songs));  
tune Bunessan/Scottish traditional (Morning Has Broken)

Offertory Song permission through Worship Design Studio

Song of Our Warming Planet — arranged by Daniel Crawford in collaboration with Scott St. George ([www.vimeo.com/69122809](http://www.vimeo.com/69122809)) is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 — <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)

As the Turn of the World Draws Near — text by David Weiss © 2021. Tune: Star of the County Down (Irish traditional)

SPUCC Creation Justice Covenant adopted by the congregation on October 20, 2020; drafted by the Creation Justice Church Task Force: Tracy Kugler, Marissa Dakay, Debra George, Tracie Olson Payne, David Weiss, and Clare Gromoll

**Reverend Sarah Brouwer** Lead Minister  
**Judith Melander** Director of Music & Cantor  
**Luke Ackerman, Jake Grussing, Lori Jensen, Laura Michelson** Liturgists  
**Lori Peiffer** cello | **Steve Swanson** piano  
**Kristin Morant, John Rynders, Nick Mroczek** Vocalists  
**Lucas Cervi** Livestreaming and Sound

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## About Food Justice and Our Sacred Circle

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**This our fifth Sacred Circle for Our Climate.** This Circle reflects the theme selected by Interfaith Power & Light for their annual Faith Climate Action Week: “Sacred Ground: Cultivating Connections Between Our Faith, Our Food, and the Climate.” (The information below is adapted from the IPL Sacred Ground Guide, [www.faithclimateactionweek.org](http://www.faithclimateactionweek.org).)

Creation stories from many religious traditions center around gardens and soil. In Abrahamic traditions, God made humans (earthlings!) from earth itself and placed them in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. A common North American Indigenous creation story tells how Turtle Island (North America) was created when soil was placed on the back of a turtle. Humans have lived in close connection with the soil for thousands of years. Some cultures flourished by living in harmony with nature, taking only what they needed and preserving the soil so that it could continue to nourish them. Many of these indigenous principles directly shape conservation practices today.

Modern industrial agriculture practices have allowed us to grow more food more cheaply than ever before, but at the cost of the health of our soil. Tilling and chemical inputs damage the soil, leading to erosion and desertification and releasing carbon that contributes to climate change. Now, in a vicious cycle, extreme weather events due to climate change make it harder for our farmers to grow food. According to the United Nations, two-thirds of the world is desertifying and the world's remaining topsoil will be gone in 60 years unless we find a way to save our soil.

The worst impacts of the climate crisis in the United States are felt by Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and low-income communities in the form of increased floods, droughts, fires, and heat deaths. These communities — millions of people — also often lack access to fresh, healthy, affordable food in their neighborhoods. The fight for food justice seeks to address the structural barriers that create “food deserts” and prevent equitable access to fresh and nutritious food. Just climate solutions must connect the dots between the intersecting challenges of racial justice and food justice — and then act in solidarity with vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Healthy soil helps solve the climate crisis. There are more microbes in a teaspoon of healthy soil than there are people on the planet! These microbes are an important part of the natural system that draws carbon down out of the atmosphere and into the ground, where it belongs. Food growing practices that conserve or regenerate the soil support the health of these tiny creatures and the system they are part of. Many exemplary farmers are already farming for Creation by caring for the soil. Healthy soil leads to healthy humans and animals, healthy water, and healthy climate. How we grow our food — and the choices we make in purchasing our food — is integral to the way we care for the earth and each other as members of a common humanity.

To learn more about the promise of regenerative agriculture, view the film *Kiss the Ground*, (<https://kissthegroundmovie.com>), recommended by IPL and currently viewable on Netflix.

Our **Sacred Circle for the Climate** was developed by members at St. Paul's United Church of Christ as a spontaneous outgrowth of our desire to take a first concrete step after reading *Active Hope* (see *below*\*) together over the summer of 2019. The book presents a practical way to process thoughts and feelings about the threat posed by climate change and is especially powerful when read as a group. We found it transformational.

We held our first Sacred Circle on the evening of the Youth Climate Strike (September 20, 2019). Our second Sacred Circle, held in April 2020, commemorated the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and was pre-recorded via Zoom for YouTube viewing during the initial pandemic shutdown. Our third Sacred Circle, held outside again on August 30, 2020 (with stringent COVID-19 safety protocols in place), was part of the Relay for Our Water and held in solidarity with Anishinaabe-Ojibwe people fighting to protect the water imperiled by the new Line 3 oil pipeline in northern Minnesota. We held our fourth Sacred Circle in March 2021 to honor the links between racial justice and climate justice. We will continue to use this Sacred Circle to prayerfully honor the connections between climate and other aspects of shared life on a small planet — sowing the seeds of Active Hope each time we gather.

\**Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're In without Going Crazy* by Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone (New World Library, 2012; [www.activehope.info](http://www.activehope.info)).

Learn more about our congregation's longstanding and deepening work around environmental and climate justice (including our food ethics statement, our support for community-supported agriculture, and our church rain gardens) at

<http://www.spuconsummit.org/cms2/index.php/mission-outreach/earthwise-team>.

Learn more about the United Church of Christ's work on environmental and climate justice at

<http://www.ucc.org/what-we-do-2/justice-local-church-ministries/justice/faithful-action-ministries/environmental-justice>.

Learn more about the United Church of Christ's work on racial justice at <http://www.ucc.org/what-we-do-2/justice-local-church-ministries/justice/faithful-action-ministries/racial-justice/>.

### This Week's Calendar

Sunday April 25 | Fourth Sunday of Easter

- 9:00 am Early Birds | Reflecting on this week's scriptures via Zoom  
<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/85606142340?pwd=bmtMK1E4eHFuYXg2YnBZTXFxSk5nUT09>
- 9:30 am Spring Sunday School via Zoom  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83949619266?pwd=WUITa1VYSytjY1dnNmRveGhEQ3A3dz09>
- 10:30 am Livestreaming worship  
<https://iframe.dacast.com/live/e48367dc-856c-5f48-3b4b-e20db18a3a45/c421c34d-9cc6-18cf-99d6-6c50ff0b2398>
- Noon Coffee Hour on the lawn
- Noon Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87925922176?pwd=QXdYQWlrSHIKMEhXcVdqVGR2QUlldz09>

Wednesday April 28

- 6:30 pm Journey of Faith via Zoom | Homelessness — Growing for Five Decades  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85028837751?pwd=NGZCbUI3Y3NxUUUVLZ0NSOVINc3VTdz09>
- 7:30 pm Family Ministry Committee via Zoom  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82987737795?pwd=aXFZaEpCcEdPVkk4TzFoV1hldWtxZz09>

Sunday May 2 | Fifth Sunday of Easter

- 9:00 am Early Birds | Reflecting on this week's scriptures via Zoom  
<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/85606142340?pwd=bmtMK1E4eHFuYXg2YnBZTXFxSk5nUT09>
- 9:30 am Spring Sunday School via Zoom  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83949619266?pwd=WUITa1VYSytjY1dnNmRveGhEQ3A3dz09>
- 10:30 am Livestreaming worship  
<https://iframe.dacast.com/live/e48367dc-856c-5f48-3b4b-e20db18a3a45/c421c34d-9cc6-18cf-99d6-6c50ff0b2398>
- 11:45 am Annual Program Meeting, both in person and via Zoom  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83806153105?pwd=b0hJWW1DREFZenBaa21pR0hNQm1NQOT09>