



It's August 22, 2021: the 13th Sunday after Pentecost: Confirmation!

On behalf of our family of faith at Community United Church of Christ, Medford, WI, welcome to this time of worship! No matter who you are or where you are on your life's journey, you are welcome here. Welcome to those who are with us on Facebook "Live" and those who are worshipping at other times this week, who are watching the recording of this service on our website!

A special welcome to the families and friends of our Confirmands today.

Please stay following worship today for a time of fellowship and cupcakes, to congratulate Audrey, Ben and Toryn.

We will celebrate Holy Communion today.

Please prepare your table with bread/cracker, juice/wine.

Let's begin with Hymn # 59, verses 1 and 2: "Joyful, Joyful"

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the dark of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.
2. All thy works with joy surround thee, earth and heaven reflect thy rays,
stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in thee.

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Call to Worship: One: In the name of God, **All: wondrous, mysterious, marvelous.**

One: In the name of Jesus, **All: among us, beyond us, with us.**

One: In the name of the Spirit, **All: strange, startling, shaking;**

One: I call you to worship. **All: We come to lift our hearts and minds,
to open our lips and our lives, to celebrate our God.**

One: God calls us to God's way in our time. **All: We accept that call!**

Prayer of Confession

All: Spirit of God, you come to us as a powerful wind but we have shut the door and bolted it, trying to keep you out. You descend on us as tongues of fire, but we run away, afraid of being consumed. You give us gifts beyond our ability, but we squander them, we hide them, and we say, "Not today," or "How can one person make a difference?" or "No, Lord, not me!" Forgive us, renew us, and lead us to follow in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Pastor: Anyone in Christ becomes a new person altogether; the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new. Friends, believe the good news of the Gospel:

All: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.

We will Pass the Peace of Christ to one another by sharing the words, "Peace be with you;" then turn and wave a greeting of peace to others around you... later, call or text someone and continue this "peace passing" throughout this week. **"Peace be with you!"**

Toryn: Colossians 3:1-2, 10-14 from The Message ¹⁻² So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, *act* like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from *his* perspective.

Audrey: ¹⁰⁻¹⁴ So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out

for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Ben: Matthew, 3: 13-17...from The Message interpretation of the Bible

¹³⁻¹⁴ Jesus then appeared, arriving at the Jordan River from Galilee.

He wanted John to baptize him. John objected, "I'm the one who needs to be baptized, not you!"

¹⁵ But Jesus insisted. "Do it. God's work, putting things right all these centuries, is coming together right now in this baptism." So... John did it. ¹⁶⁻¹⁷ The moment Jesus came up out of the baptismal waters, the skies opened up and he saw God's Spirit—it looked like a dove—descending and landing on him.

And along with the Spirit, a voice: "This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life."

The title of my Message today is: "What to Put On"

Please pray with me. God of love, giver of grace, we thank you for this day of celebration. You have taught us how to wait and have given us hope and greater purpose in the midst of these uncertain days. Perhaps we have prayed for patience. Perhaps we have prayed for change. Perhaps we have prayed for courage. Perhaps we have prayed for wisdom. We give you thanks for the waiting time and for every whisper in our ears, every answer to our prayers even when they came in packages that we didn't expect.

We give you thanks and praise for every chance
you have given us to begin again, as we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen

I'd like to begin with some words of the prophet Isaiah 40:28-31, as written in The Message interpretation, ²⁷⁻³¹ *Why would you ever complain, O Jacob, or whine, Israel, saying, "God has lost track of me. He doesn't care what happens to me"? Don't you know anything? Haven't you been listening? God doesn't come and go. God lasts. He's Creator of all you can see or imagine. He doesn't get tired out, doesn't pause to catch his breath. And he knows everything, inside and out. He energizes those who get tired, gives fresh strength to dropouts. For even young people tire and drop out, young folk in their prime stumble and fall.*

But those who wait upon God get fresh strength. They spread their wings and soar like eagles, they run and don't get tired, they walk and don't lag behind.

In God's perfect timing, the waiting for this day began September 22, 2019 when Toryn, Audrey, Ben and I (and one of your parents) first got together and began the study of a book called, "*Affirming Faith.*" In 22 sessions, most of them, in-person, but, some on Zoom, we studied the history of the Christian Church, the history of our denomination, the UCC, and the history of this congregation, the Christian symbols and the emblem of the United Church of Christ. There were 15 chapters that led us through the UCC Statement of Faith...line by line. We talked about the sacraments and worship. We read scripture. You became acquainted with the books of the OT and the NT by means of a "rap." When you said "yes" to joining in the Confirmation study, did you even guess what we would be talking about? Did you guess right? Congratulations on accomplishing this task!

For many years, the church has been calling this study and this day of celebration, "*Confirmation.*" The roots of Confirmation can be found in the Church of the New Testament. In the Gospel of John 14:15-26, Jesus speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. It was recorded that the apostles were bestowing the Holy Spirit upon others through the "*laying on of hands.*" To symbolize that the Holy Spirit is with you (and all of us) today and to reenact that ancient tradition, your family and I will lay our hands upon each of you as you are confirmed today. This tradition is followed in the United Church of Christ, as well as other denominations, when people are confirmed, ordained or installed into ministry.

Your Confirmation Day was originally planned for May 31, 2020. Later, we thought that a date in September would work out. God said, "Wait." And so, we waited. Actually for the three of you, the waiting began more than 13 years ago on the day that you were baptized. Have you asked your parents about that day? Who was there with you? Did you have sponsors? What did you wear? Was there a party? I don't know the answers to those questions, but I do know that on your Baptism day, your parents, your Godparents and your families promised with God's help, to encourage you to renounce the powers of evil and to receive the freedom of new

life in Christ; they promised to teach you to profess Jesus Christ as Savior and to follow his way: resisting oppression and evil, showing love and justice, as best they were able. They promised that they would grow with you in the Christian faith and help you to be a faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ, by celebrating Christ's presence, by furthering Christ's mission in all the world, and by offering to you the nurture of the Christian Church so that you may one day affirm your baptism. It was quite an impressive promise, don't you think? Your family made this promise because they love you and they wanted to share their faith with you.

When Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan, a voice was heard...the voice of God, that is. God called Jesus "beloved son." In the Message interpretation of the Bible that Ben just read, these were the words: "This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life." And then, the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus in the form of a Dove. When Jesus walked out of the river that day, scripture tells us that he retreated into the wilderness and came out again 40 days later to begin his public ministry. It is because Jesus was baptized that the Christian Church celebrates Baptism as a Sacrament.

It is my hope that you will savor this affirming of your faith and that you will take some time to think about it...maybe it will take 40 days, maybe it will take your whole life...but think about how you have been called to affirm...to say "yes!" to the same promises that were spoken on the day of your Baptism. Keep this little bulletin in your Bible and check it occasionally to see how you are doing, with God's help... to keep these promises.

We each have been called God's "beloved children." As Ben, Audrey and Toryn affirm their faith, listen and renew your faith promises along with them. We each, no matter who we are or where we are on our life's journey are still discovering who we are and how we will continue to lead a life worthy of this precious calling.

Does anyone here remember your baptism? Do you know what you were wearing that day? Did you have any trouble figuring out what to wear today? Today, I will be giving you "Confirmands" these crosses. They were made by Mr. Roger Higgins shortly after you began your Confirmation studies. I hope that they will serve as a reminder for you, God's beloved ones, to "put on love" in all things you do from this day forward.

What will that love look like? Toryn and Audrey read the description in Paul's letter to the Colossians:

"...dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline.

Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love.

It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

This is the day that God has made for your Confirmation. This day is more important than completing a course of study about the church; it is a time of committing your life to those same Baptismal promises that your parents claimed for you many years ago. Do not think of it as a graduation, but, rather...think of it as the next step in your journey of faith. It is your pledge to "be the church" inside of these brick walls and wherever you may go and in whatever you will do when you walk out of these doors today. You are now being sent out to learn more, to serve more and to continue to grow in your faith. Do not forget the words that you will speak today and do not worry about what else you will wear!

Breathe in joy. Breathe out the waiting.

Morning Prayer: Pray with me: Loving God, you have blessed us each with a song to sing, a life to live and a joy to bring...a path to follow and explore...a dream to dream, a place to soar. We give to you all thanks and praise on this day of celebration.

Amidst our joy, O God, there are many who are crying today. Bless those who are in Haiti picking up the pieces of their lives and who are dealing with another great loss. Bless those who are in Afghanistan and those who are seeking refuge. Bless us as people of extravagant welcome and risk-taking mission, as we open our arms to welcome the refugees and open our hands and our pocketbooks to assist in relief efforts however we are able. Gracious God, guide the leaders of our world to be just and merciful in all that they do.

We trust that you are near to you those who are hurting and in need of healing, those who have been newly diagnosed with the COVID virus, those recovering from surgery; those awaiting the results of medical testing and those undergoing difficult treatments and rehabilitation; those who struggle with mental illness and addictions. We ask your blessings on families who have lost loved ones.

We give thanks for unexpected joys and blessings sent our way... for good news and good friends, the love of family and the concern and care of those around us.

Let's pray now in the name and in the words of Jesus: 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 sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn: "Come, Build a Church" vs. 1-2, 543

Chorus: Come, build a church with soul and spirit, come build a church with flesh and bone. We need no tower rising skyward; no house of wood, or glass or stone. Come build a church with human frailty. Come build a church of flesh and blood. Jesus shall be its sure foundation. It shall be built by the hand of God.

1. Let us see the tongues of fire. Let us hear the great wind roar. Let us know the awe and wonder that we've only glimpsed before. Let us feel the strength of passion, which can make us laugh and weep. Let us know this great awakening. For so long we've been asleep. **Chorus**
2. Let us know the love unceasing, which alone can loose the bounds, reaching out across the chasms, bringing walls of hatred down. Let us taste the sweet communion, there the circle never ends. Hold us in the sweet connection, turning strangers into friends. **Chorus**

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The Rite of Confirmation

Benjamin Isaac Grube

Toryn Elizabeth Rau

Audrey Marie Ruesch

Invitation: Pastor Mary Jo: I invite those who wish to affirm their faith to come forward at this time. Friends in Christ, we are all received into the church through the sacrament of Baptism. Ben, Toryn and Audrey have found nurture and support in the midst of the Christian Church. Through prayer and study, they have been led by the Holy Spirit to affirm their faith and to claim in our presence their covenantal relationship with Christ and the members of the church.

Pastor Mary Jo: Do you desire to affirm your Baptism into the faith and family of Jesus Christ? **Yes.**

Pastor Mary Jo: Do you renounce the powers of evil and desire the freedom of new life in Christ? **Yes.**

Pastor Mary Jo: Do you profess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? **Yes.**

Pastor Mary Jo: Do you promise, by the grace of God, to be Christ's disciples, to follow in the example and teachings of Jesus, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the good news of the Gospel as best you are able? **A, B & T: I promise, with the help of God.**

Pastor Mary Jo: Do you promise, according to the grace given to you, to continue to grow in the Christian faith, and to be a faithful member of the church of Jesus Christ, and to share the love of God with all those that you meet? **A, B & T: I promise, with the help of God.**

Do you promise to participate in the life and mission of this family of faith of God's people, sharing regularly in the worship of God and enlisting in the work of this church as it serves the community and the world? **A, B & T: I promise with the help of God.**

Pastor Mary Jo: Let us pray together: with Audrey, Ben & Toryn: O God, my God, known to me in Jesus Christ, I give myself to you as your own, to love and serve you faithfully all the days of my life. Amen.

Let us all unite our voices with those who are about to be confirmed and say what we believe in the words of the **United Church of Christ Statement of Faith:**

We believe in you, O God, the Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify: You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image and set

before each one the ways of life and death. You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin. You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world, to resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you: forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your kingdom which has no end. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you. Amen.

Prayers of the Congregation: Pastor MJ: Let us as members and friends of this Congregation pray together for Audrey, Ben & Toryn: Almighty God, who in Baptism received your servants into the church, forgave their sins, and promised them eternal life, increase in them the gifts of your Holy Spirit. Grant love for others, joy in serving, joy in serving you, peace in conflict, patience in suffering, kindness toward all people, goodness in evil times, faithfulness in temptation, gentleness in the face of opposition, self-control in all things. Strengthen Ben, Toryn and Audrey for their ministry in the world; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

The Rite of Confirmation: As I call each Confirmand's name, I invite their parents, Baptismal Sponsors, and families to come forward with them. B, T and A will read the *Confirmation Verse* that they have chosen.

Benjamin Isaac Grube: Mark 9:23 ²³ Jesus said to him, "If you are able! All things can be done for the one who believes." Pastor Mary Jo: Strengthen, O God, this your servant, Ben, with your heavenly grace that he may continue yours forever: and daily increase in him your Holy Spirit, until you receive him at last into your eternal home. Amen.

Toryn Elizabeth Rau: Colossians 3:2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. Pastor Mary Jo: Toryn, the God of mercies multiply grace and peace in you, enable you truly and faithfully to keep your vows, defend you in every time of danger, preserve you to the end, and finally bring you to rest with all the saints in glory everlasting. Amen

Audrey Marie Ruesch: Proverbs 16:24 Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. Pastor Mary Jo: O God, in the grace of Jesus Christ you have accepted this your servant, Audrey, through the water of Baptism. Nourish in her the power of your Holy Spirit that she may serve you in the world. Amen.

Prayer of Confirmation: Pastor Mary Jo: We rejoice, O merciful God, with Audrey, Ben and Toryn, in the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in the Spirit's power to awaken us to new truth and to inspire us to venture into fullness of life. We give you thanks that Audrey, Ben and Toryn have been moved to affirm their faith today. Help them to live not for themselves but for Christ and those whom Christ loves. Keep them steady and abounding in hope, never giving up, pressing toward the goal of life with you in Jesus Christ. Amen.

By your baptism, you were made one with in the body of Christ, the church. Today, we rejoice in your pilgrimage of faith which has brought you to this time and place. We celebrate your presence in this household of faith, Do you promise to participate in the life and mission of this family of God's people, sharing regularly in the worship of God and enlisting in the work of this local church as it serves this community and the world? **A, B & T: I promise, with the help of God.**

Words of Welcome: We promise you our continuing friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of the church of Jesus Christ. By the love and power of the Holy Spirit may we continue to grow together in God's knowledge, in Jesus' teachings and in healing a broken world. Together, may we make a difference!

Pastor Mary Jo:

Let us pray: Eternal God, we praise you for calling us to faith and for gathering us into the church, the body of Christ. We ask your blessing on all those gathered here and give you thanks that you have increased our community of faith this day. Together, may we live in the Spirit, build one another up in love, share life and worship; and serve the world in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Sacrament of Holy Communion All are welcome to share the Sacrament.

Pastor: We begin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He was always the guest. In the homes of Peter and Jairus, Martha and Mary, Joanna and Susanna, He was always the guest.

At the meal tables of the wealthy where He pled the case of the poor, He was always the guest.

Upsetting polite company, befriending isolated people, welcoming the stranger, He was always the guest.

But here, at this table, He is the host.

Those who wish to serve Him, must first be served by Him.

Those who want to follow Him, must first be fed by Him.

This is the table where God intends us to be nourished; this is the time when Christ can make us new.

So, come, you who hunger and thirst for a deeper faith, for a better life, for a fairer world. Jesus Christ, who has sat at our tables, now invites us to be guests at His. On the night on which He was betrayed, and as they were sitting at a meal, Jesus took a piece of bread and broke it. He gave it to His disciples saying:

“This is my body. It is broken for you. Do this, all of you, to remember me.”

Later, after they had eaten, he took a cup of wine and said:

“This cup is the new relationship with God made possible because of my death.

Drink this, all of you, to remember me.”

So now, we do as Jesus did. We take this bread and cup, the produce of the earth and fruit of human labor.

In these, Jesus has promised to be present. Let us pray:

Merciful God, bless this bread, and bless this fruit of the vine. Bless all of us in our eating and drinking at this table that our eyes may be opened, and we may recognize the risen Christ in our midst, in each other. Amen Eat the bread and drink of the cup, remembering Jesus.

Prayer of Thanksgiving: We thank you, loving God, for inviting us to this table where we have known the presence of Christ and have received all Christ’s gifts. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and let us show forth your praise in our lives; in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Time of Intention and Thanks: We each, as members and friends of this church family, are called to minister to one another and to the world around us. Thank you, to all of you whose various gifts electronically, through the mail and those given in person today have enabled Community United Church of Christ to faithfully serve. Let us dedicate our gifts:

Gracious God, accept our offerings today. Move us to remembrance that as we have been baptized, your grace was poured out on us, not because we earned it, but, because of your amazing generosity. In our giving and in our receiving, we offer our prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Amen.

Hymn: “Come, Build a Church” vs. 3, 543

Chorus: Come, build a church with soul and spirit, come build a church with flesh and bone. We need no tower rising skyward; no house of wood, or glass or stone. Come build a church with human frailty. Come build a church of flesh and blood. Jesus shall be its sure foundation. It shall be built by the hand of God.

3. Guide our feet in peaceful pathways. Teach us peace of heart and mind; peace with God and all God’s children; till we leave our wars behind. Surely joy will come and find us like a breeze that cools the night; like the rain upon the desert; like the candle’s gentle light. **Chorus**

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Benediction May God bless us and keep us, may God’s face shine upon us and give us peace, and may God lay his mighty hand on us just when we need it most. Let us go now...always wearing our best “love” outfit...it will be well-suited for every occasion. Go in peace & continue to be safe.

Pastor Mary Jo