



First Congregational Church (UCC) of Ashfield
429 Main Street – Ashfield MA 01330
Creating Community, Welcoming All

November 21, 2021 Scripture, Reflection and Litany for the Rededication of our Organ
Rev. David Jones

Scripture & Reflection - Nov 21, Rededication of Organ

First Reading Psalm 100 Liz Van Guilder

100:1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

100:2 Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing.

100:3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

100:4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.

100:5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Second Reading Matthew 6:25-33 Bruce Bennett

6:25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

6:26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

6:27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

6:28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin,

6:29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

6:30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you--you of little faith?

6:31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'

6:32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

6:33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Reflection on the Rededication of Our Organ, on Thanksgiving Sunday

Rev. David Jones

On a day like this one--even though it is Stewardship Sunday--I do not see that there is much need for a sermon. Between this restored organ, which we have just rededicated together as a community, and our huge, joyful choir--with special guests here to help us celebrate--our cup is already overflowing with the hopeful message of our scriptures, already overflowing with an abiding faith in each other and in the God who is love that never fails to provide. Between our restored organ and the genuine thanksgiving that is in our hearts this morning, it would not be possible to put any finer point on the importance and worthiness of good stewardship than has already been made by the joyful noise of our prelude and introit, and by the hymns we sing together.

Today is not just about today, or about this year's stewardship campaign. Today is about the people and the musicians and choir directors and every singer who has come before us. It is about every congregant or friend or stranger who has taken a seat in one of these pews in a moment of distress or grief, or in a moment of fresh hope. It hardly seems right to preach my own particular message, when the timeless good news of Rev. Ann Hallstein and Nancy Sykes, Rev. Kate Stevens and Rev. Bob Stowe, and all the ministers that have helped shepherd this church and this community are also honored this morning. And it is not just the ministers or members of this church in Ashfield, but the whole community of faith and goodwill that is present with us today. I remember sitting in the pews in Jacksonville a few years ago when the fight for LGBTQ protections in that city had suffered a major setback, and we cried together to the chords of We Shall Overcome. That church's pastor, Rev. Linda, and every person of faith and goodwill that has dared to struggle for justice and dared to hope for peace--ordained or lay--is honored by the seriousness and the joyfulness and the incredible generosity of this community, in this restored organ.

That's how great undertakings like this work. They are not ends unto themselves, but great means to the ends of God's hope and love; they are not ends but means to pull us closer to one another across time and space. The joyful noise of this organ today bonds us to the music that sparked the Psalmist, that praised God in the early church; bonds us to the spiritual and the folk songs of resistance, and to the unshakeable reign of the God who is love. The joyful noise of this organ bonds us to the vast human dignity that we are all born to, by the grace of our Creator. The joyful noise of tomorrow, of a new Creation, is being called forth by every swept-up worshipper among us today.

Today is also about Rev. Bert's inspiring messages of giving and receiving--about supporting the church intentionally from a deep sense of God's abundance; it is about Richard and Chris, Jeannine and Rochelle's messages of outreach into our community and inreach to those people who consecrate this sanctuary every Sunday. Today is about George Reed and the love and admiration and conviction that these miraculous instruments be held and cared for with reverence. Today is a capstone to the vision and leadership of this church's many good stewards. And it is proof--it is colorful, gorgeous evidence--that all things are possible when we make the joyful noise of common cause.

Today we have an important task, to rededicate to God's everlasting glory this magnificent instrument. This is a gift to God, to one another, to those who came before us, to those who will soon join us, and to those who will sit in those very pews and look up at this organ after we have gone. Let us be grateful for each other and for those all around us who did something so much bigger than ourselves. *And*

let us not forget *exactly* what we have done: in a few short years we have restored this precious thing that lived with our people for generations, through so much--*we've accomplished that together!*

So as we read Matthew today, let us remember also that the next big thing is waiting for us to take up. Do not worry about what we do not currently have; God will worry about that for us. Let go of your worries. Instead, *dare*--as we did just a few years ago, and as Christians and people of faith and goodwill have done here for centuries--*dare instead* to set our sights on the next big thing, on the next sacred means to God's sacred ends of justice and peace. With the rededication of this organ, one chapter of our good stewardship concludes. Our restored organ is now transmuted. It is no longer the subject of our energy but an object brought back to life to draw fresh power *from*.

We are, as a community, stronger today than we were yesterday; thanks to Bill and Stein, we even look and sound better than we did yesterday. Not every church can say that. So let's make sure it renews us, and lifts up our souls, from this Sunday forward. Because God is still speaking--and our liturgy is still singing. And I cannot wait to see, from close up this time, what this remarkable church will do next.

Alleluia and amen.

Litany of Organ Rededication

Adapted by Rev. David Jones from litanies of rededication of the Church of England, United Methodist Church, and the United Church of Christ

Responsive Prayer (Led by Rev. Jones)

Leader: Gathered as one people of faith and goodwill, who live and work and rest here in the hilltowns and in the valley, we now present this pipe organ to be consecrated to the glory of the God who is love and for service in this congregation.

People: It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to make a joyful noise in your name.

Leader: It is good to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness at night. For you, O Lord, have made us glad by your work;

People: At the works of your hands, we sing for joy.

Leader: O God, you are the source of all hope and creativity; you are the endless power that brings forth skilled composers and poets, craftspeople, and musicians. Accept this day our deepest gratitude for the gift of music and, especially today, for the gift of this restored organ. Especially today, we praise you for that music that finds God in the sky that we may reach for and in the soil that we may grow in.

People: We praise you for this organ which makes us feel understood even as we struggle to understand, which supports us in the subtle growth of the soul, and which breathes new life into our sacred stories. We praise you for this restored organ that lifts us up anew, and that plants us in our community more firmly than ever.

Proclamation (Led by Diaconate)

Leader: For the worship of God in prayer and praise, of the Word, for the celebration of the holy sacraments,

People: We rededicate this organ.

Leader: For the comfort of those who mourn, for the help of those who are perplexed, for the guidance of those who seek strength,

People: We rededicate this organ.

Leader: For the support and nurture of families, for the guidance of children, for the calling of youth to a life of service,

People: We rededicate this organ.

Leader: For guarding against evil, for fostering faithfulness, for promoting peace in all the earth,

People: We rededicate this organ.

Leader: For the opening of minds to your truth, for the care of those in need, for the giving of hope and courage,

People: We rededicate this organ.

Leader: For the unity of all people of faith and goodwill, for the carrying of good news and the delivery of true justice for all, for the furtherance of the unity of all people,

People: We rededicate this organ.

Leader: For the consecration of life and service, in grateful remembrance of those who have gone before us, and in gratitude for our life together in this church,

People: We rededicate this organ to the glory of God, and to the praise of the Spirit.

All: Thanks be to God!

Choir When the Morning Stars Together "Weisse Flaggen" (Cologne, 1741)