

**October 18, 2020**  
**Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 24)**  
**Stewardship Sunday**



Even after all this time, the Sun never says to the Earth, "You owe me."  
Look what happens with a love like that. It lights the whole sky. - **Hafiz**

"That's what I consider true generosity: You give your all, and yet you always  
feel as if it costs you nothing." - **Simone de Beauvoir**

"Generosity is not in giving me that which I need more than you do, but it is in  
giving me that which you need more than I do." - **Kahlil Gibran**

"The greatest good you can do for another, is not just to share your riches, but  
reveal to them their own." - **Benjamin Disraeli**

"If instead of a gem, or even a flower, we should cast the gift of a loving  
thought into the heart of a friend. That would be giving as the angels  
give." - **George MacDonald**

"What we spend, we lose. What we keep will be left for others. What we  
give away will be ours forever." - **David McGee**

There is all the difference in the world between treasure and money."  
- **Roderick Townley**

"We are treasure chests with more jewels inside than we can imagine."  
- **Ifeanyi Enoch Onuoha**

**ORDER OF WORSHIP**

**PRELUDE:** "Money, that's what I Want" words by Berry Gordy, music by Janie Bradford, *Patty Meyer, piano*

## **GREETING-WELCOME-ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Good morning and welcome! My name is Elisa Lucozzi and I am pastor to the beloved community that is Guilford Community Church. We're so glad you have joined us this morning!

Although we really miss being together in person, we continue to gather online because we love and care about our congregation and our community, because we want to maintain physical distancing in a way that helps us to feel connected, but also keeps us all safe. Although it is hard to be physically distant from one another, we also know that it can't keep our hearts from connecting, and we know it is indeed the best way of caring for one another right now. Let us keep creating new ways of "being church", because we know that "being church" has nothing to do with a building and everything to do with loving each other. Let us gather to be the church in a new way, with a welcome wide enough for all.

### **All Saints/All Souls**

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, All Saints/All Souls, we will be asking for you to offer names and to light a candle for souls we have lost in this last year: family, friends, saints of this congregation or people in our human family we have lost this past year. We will also light special candles to honor the souls lost to the COVID virus and those lost to violence fueled by racism. After worship on Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, I will set up a special zoom meeting to record these tributes for inclusion in our All Saints/All Souls service. If you would like someone to come and record your tribute, please call the office and speak with Patty. You can also mail a photograph of a loved one to the church for inclusion in the video memorial.

### **20 Days of Prayer for Election Season**

So, as we begin, let us acknowledge and honor this land we occupy, by honoring and acknowledging those First Nation people to whom this land belongs:

We gather here on the bank of the Broad Brook,  
in the shadow of the great Mount Wantastiquet,  
in the valley of the rushing Connecticut,  
to worship and discern together the call of God,  
to the United Church of Christ for these days.  
Let us know that we do so on the hunting grounds  
and homelands of the Mahican and Penacook people,  
as well as the southernmost members of the Abenaki Tribe.  
These people used this land since time immemorial

and are still among us in the present.  
We offer them our gratitude and respect,  
our repentance and hope in solidarity with them...

**It is a holy communion we share of life on earth,  
of past and present, of pain and reconciliation,  
of mystery and majesty...let us begin.**

## **SILENT MEDITATION & LIGHTING OF CANDLES**

**CALL TO WORSHIP** by Thom Shuman  
(inspired by Song of Solomon 2:8-13, James 1:17-27)

Here, our Beloved speaks to us;  
the voice of our Beloved sounds  
in our hearts:

**calling us to generous acts,  
to share the gifts we have been given.**

Now, our Beloved speaks to us;  
the voice of our Beloved sounds  
in our land:

**calling us to generous acts,  
to open our hearts to all in need.**

In every place, in every moment,  
our Beloved speaks to us;  
the voice of our Beloved sounds  
in all creation:

**calling us to generous acts,  
to stand with God's people:  
the least, the lost, the little, the last.**

**OPENING HYMN:** #353 "Called as Partners in Christ's Service"  
Words by Jane Parker Huber (1981), music by John Zundel (1855), sung by the  
GCC Virtual Choir accompanied by Patty Meyer on piano

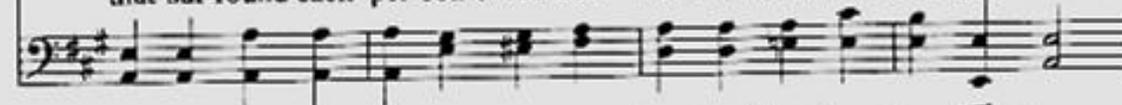
# 353 Called as Partners in Christ's Service



1. Called as part-ners in Christ's ser-vice, called to min-is-tries of grace,
2. Christ's ex-am-ple, Christ's in-spir-ing, Christ's clear call to work and worth,
3. Thus new pat-terns for Christ's mis-sion, in a small or glob-al sense,
4. So God grant us for to-mor-row ways to or-der hu-man life



we re-spond with deep com-mit-ment fresh new lines of faith to trace.  
 let us fol-low, nev-er fal-tering, rec-on-cil-ing folk on earth.  
 help us bear each oth-er's bur-dens, break-ing down each wall or fence.  
 that sur-round each per-son's sor-row with a calm that con-que-ers strife.



May we learn the art of shar-ing, side by side and friend with friend,  
 Men and wom-en, rich-er, poor-er, all God's peo-ple, young and old,  
 Words of com-fort, words of vi-sion, words of chal-lenge, said with care.  
 Make us part-ners in our liv-ing, our com-pas-sion to in-crease,



e-qual part-ners in our car-ing to ful-fill God's cho-sen end.  
 blend-ing hu-man skills to-geth-er gra-cious gifts from God un-fold.  
 bring new pow'r and strength for ac-tion, make us part-ners, free and fair.  
 mes-sen-gers of faith, thus giv-ing hope and con-fi-dence and peace.



**PRAYER OF INVOCATION** by Henri J.M. Nouwen

Dear God,  
I am so afraid to open my clenched fists!  
Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to?  
Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands?  
Please help me to gradually open my hands  
and to discover that I am not what I own,  
but what you want to give me.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious Creator,  
You have given us so much,  
but too often we take those gifts for granted,  
or as something to which we are entitled.

You call us to live in caring community,  
but too often we place our wants and needs first,  
with those of others a distant second.

You call us to share Your gifts with the world around us,  
but we are worried that there may not be enough,  
and our worrying gets in the way of our sharing.

For all the times when we mistreat and misuse Your gifts,  
for all the times we assume that we get what we have by ourselves,  
forgive us and lead us back to the path of wisdom.

**Silence**

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

God is a gracious giver.  
God is gracious in forgiveness.  
God calls us to new patterns and new life.  
We are a forgiven people!

**Thanks be to God! Amen**

**ANTHEM:** “Keep So Busy Praisin’ My Jesus (Ain’t Got Time to Die)”  
African American spiritual by Hal Johnson *Andy and Robin Davis, Tom and  
Connie Green, and Peter and Mary Alice Amidon*

**CHILDREN’S STORY:** “The Empty Pot” by Demi

**PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN**

**CHILDREN’S HYMN:** #467 “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me”

African American spiritual *Jeanushka Fishell*, with *Andy and Robin Davis* and *Patty Meyer*, piano

## I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me 467

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are: "I'm gon-na live so God can use me use me) an - y - time, Lord, and an - y - where. (yes, an - y - where.) I'm gon-na live (I'm gon-na live so) God can use me an - y - time, Lord, and an - y - where. (yes an - y - where.)". The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and chords that support the vocal melody.

Stanza 2. I'm gonna work 3. I'm gonna pray 4. I'm gonna sing

**READINGS:** "The Wise Woman's Stone" Author Unknown *Bev Langeveld*

A wise woman who was traveling in the mountains found a precious stone in a stream. The next day she met another traveler who was hungry, and the wise woman opened her bag to share her food. The hungry traveler saw the precious

stone and asked the woman to give it to him. She did so without hesitation. The traveler left, rejoicing in his good fortune. He knew the stone was worth enough to give him security for a lifetime. But a few days later he came back to return the stone to the wise woman.

"I've been thinking," he said, "I know how valuable the stone is, but I give it back in the hope that you can give me something even more precious. Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me the stone."

### **Matthew 6:19-21, 24**

<sup>19</sup> Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. <sup>24</sup> No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

**CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:** Hymn #617 "Write These Words in Our Hearts"

**ANTHEM:** "Let the Life I've Lived" African American spiritual sung by the *Guilford Community Church 9:00 Choir and singers from the community at the Latchis Theater on November 11, 2017*

**SERMON:** "Treasured"

*I invite you to pray with me – May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, loving and gracious God.*

It's Stewardship Sunday, although those of you who didn't know that already may have guessed based on the passage from the Gospel of Matthew that Bev read for us. "Where your treasure is there your heart is also." Is there a church in any Christian denomination that hasn't used this piece of Scripture as part of their stewardship drive? It is THE go-to passage when preaching for Stewardship Sunday, and with good reason. However, it may be interesting to note that in the lectionary, this passage from Matthew is assigned to Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. Lent – a time focused on prayer and "charitable" acts.

Now most of us know that money is one of the top three things that it is most difficult to talk about in any relationship and that includes our relationship with God. As we also know, Jesus had a lot to say about economics. By one count, there are 2,300 verses on money, wealth and possessions in the Bible. Jesus spoke about money roughly 15% of his preaching and 11 out of 39 parables. It was his most talked about topic. The most vivid image of Jesus with regard to money that comes into my mind, is that image of him flipping

the tables of the money changers in the temple. He quite literally turned the tables on how we should regard and how we should use the funds we have available to us. Jesus spoke about money, not because he was obsessed with money, or that he wanted us to have lots of it, but because he knew that money was a **heart issue** and that it is one of the most likely reasons for someone to not follow Him, or to give up on Him. Jesus was an economist of the heart.

So even though we are using this traditional Scripture for our Stewardship Sunday, I'd like to invite you into it in a different way. Today I'd like to invite you to join me on a treasure hunt!

When I look at Scripture, I often find that the first word that stands out, or my first association that comes to mind when I read, leads me to an important revelation. So, the word that stood out for me in this passage was "treasure". And why? Well, actually because it brought me back to my childhood. It recalled to me being a young girl living in the inner city of Boston and playing outside with friends. This was the kind of play that seemed to always be about using our imaginations to create some kind of adventure, back in the days before X-Box, back in the days even before Atari!

Why does one embark on a hunt for treasure? Perhaps for the sense of adventure. To find something long lost – an artifact, or if you're Indiana Jones, the Ark of the Covenant. But let's face it, the number one reason is because you want to find something that will make you rich! What might cause you to consider going on a treasure hunt? Or the other way to ask the question is, "What do you treasure"? The things we treasure now-a-days – you see that's the problem. we treasure things more than we treasure people, more than relationships. These days, it seems we treasure guns more than human life, corrupt and abusive power more than compassion and respect, greed more than sharing and interdependence. Not me, you might say. My most "treasured things" are my relationships, my children or grandchildren, my spouse, my best friend. Well, good! That's a start, but today I'm inviting us to dig deeper, to look for treasure in unexpected places, among the unfamiliar, not for the sake of pirating, but instead for the possibility of receiving God's kin-dom right here and right now.

So, here's a couple of tips as you embark on your treasure hunt:

*It's good to use a map and it's better if you're looking at the right one.*

When we're talking about finding treasure, it's best if you have a map. Not that it can't be done without it, but it will certainly take longer. What I see is that the path that is supposed to lead to "the treasure" is often riddled with wrong turns and digging in lots of places that in the end, despite the hard work, turns up nothing. Jesus came to hand us the map, to teach us the path, the way to riches beyond what we could imagine. Ok, just to be clear, I'm not characterizing Jesus as some kind of leprechaun. Find Jesus and you'll find

the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Jesus is constantly modeling for us where our treasures truly reside. Follow Jesus and there's your map – laid out for you! The perfect coordinates!

*Treasure is often buried.*

Treasure is often not just buried. Treasure is often where we least expect it and it is hidden. We only find it by being willing to dig, to perhaps go to uncharted places, places perhaps scary and uncomfortable. I think this is especially true about treasures of the heart. Uncovering buried treasure requires being vulnerable, and hard work. It requires giving completely of yourself. It requires valuing all those pieces of yourself enough, that you might consider them treasures.

So, as we continue on this treasure hunt I ask you an important question:

*What do you treasure?*

Another thing I hadn't realized is that this same sentiment "where your treasure is your heart is also" is expressed in the gospel of Luke 12:32-34. It reads:

<sup>32</sup> "Don't be afraid, little flock, because God delights in giving you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup> Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Make for yourselves wallets that don't wear out—a treasure in heaven that never runs out. No thief comes near there, and no moth destroys.<sup>34</sup> Where your treasure is, there your heart will be too."

As I listen to this same sentiment only in Luke's telling, I found it interesting that this passage that is supposed to be about giving, begins with telling us what we have already received – "God delights in giving YOU the kingdom." You see, we have already been given keys to the kingdom - keys to the treasure chest. God has handed them to us. It seems then, to me, that Jesus came to show us that we are a part of this kingdom treasure already – both included in it and called to help give it to others.

Jesus seems to imply that while God is waiting to hand it to us, these amazing gifts of God are perhaps already residing within each and all of us. All we have to do is pick up our heads and see what is already so; that the things of this world which 'wear out and fail', that can be stolen by a thief, do not reflect the Reign of God. They just don't. And perhaps as you and I come to recognize and embrace and live like this is so, this kin-dom God can't wait to give us, will gain a foothold in our hearts and in our lives.

My friends, it begins with us. We are God's buried treasure. We are God's beloved and it is from that belovedness which God calls us to share with one another. Just last year, we lost the Pulitzer and Nobel Peace Prize writer and

professor Toni Morrison. A prophetic voice always, but especially for today. One of her quotes in particular spoke to me when thinking about this morning's Gospel. She said this: "Perhaps that's what all human relationships boil down to: Would you save my life? or would you take it?" In other words – what do you treasure or better put who do you treasure?

This quote from another prophet, Mother Teresa summarizes it all: "At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done."

We will be judged by 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was naked and you clothed me, I was homeless and you took me in'."

Hungry not only for bread -- but hungry for love. Naked not only for clothing - but naked for human dignity and respect. Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks - but homeless because of rejection.

It is well past time that we go and seek the treasures lost or hidden or locked away. May your true treasures be revealed in the face of everyone you meet. May our hearts recognize the treasures that we are to each other. May you be given the courage to seek those treasures and give however you can to the best cause – creating God's kin-dom of justice and love here on earth. Amen.

**PASTORAL PRAYER** "Blessing of Enough" by Jan Richardson

I know how small  
this blessing seems;  
just a morsel  
that hardly matches  
the sharp hunger  
you carry inside you.  
But trust me  
when I say—  
though I can scarcely  
believe it myself—  
that between  
and behind  
and beneath  
these words  
there is a space  
where a table  
has been laid  
a feast  
has been prepared  
all has been  
made ready  
for you

and it will be  
enough  
and more.

### **Introduction to Prayers of the People:**

This is the time in our service where I invite your prayers – prayers of concern or sorrow, prayers of celebration and joy. If you have something or someone you would like our gathering to pray for, you can type it into the comments section that accompanies this live feed.

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE** by Krista Taves *Rachel and Dwayne Johnson*

Spirit of Life, God of many names, Source of all being in which we live and breathe and have our being. We come together in prayer even though many us struggle with what that means.

**We come together to stand before that which is greater than us, although we struggle to say what that is.**

And so on this day we pray for those things we struggle with.

**For the conflicts we feel within ourselves and between us and those we love.**

We pray for guidance, compassion, for the opening of a path.

**We pray for those things that give us joy and hope.**

For those things that we trust in, believe in, will sacrifice for.

**These are gifts of grace, and perhaps we need not define them in order to savor them, rejoice in them, be thankful for them.**

What we do know is that we gather this morning with all kinds of needs.

**Some are facing serious physical problems and are in need of healing.**

Others need healing of a different kind – emotional and spiritual.

**Some are facing family problems.**

Some are weary with the struggles of life and seek assurance that this will someday pass.

**Others face financial difficulties and the specter of making difficult decisions for themselves and their families.**

For each of us, we speak the deepest prayers of our hearts in different ways, knowing that what it means for them to be answered will look and feel different for each of us.

**May we, somehow, this morning be met at the point of our differences and also in the places that we are one, of the same breath of life that courses through all living things.**

May we always hold in our hearts gratitude for those things that bless us with their presence,

**forgiveness for the ways we have turned from those blessings,**

and the willingness to open ourselves anew to this beautiful and hurting world.

**Now let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught us using whatever words help us to embody its promise.**

May we bring about one small glimpse of the (kingdom) of God, a kin-dom where all are well,

**all are fed and free,**

where all are whole,

**where all know love,**

where *all* are beloved.

Let us pray: Our Father, (Our Father/Mother, Our Creator) 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom (kin-dom) and the power and the glory now and forever. Amen.

**CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:** #278 “Hear Our Prayer, Oh Lord”

**OFFERTORY**

**Call for Offering/Stewardship Moment by Rev. Quentin Chin**

We give in grateful thanksgiving for all that God has given us.  
In the upside down world of the Gospel,

we measure our wealth, not by what we have,  
but what we can give away.  
Let us give away generously, in this offering,  
to bless your church, your people, your creation.

Today besides our usual donations and offerings which you send to the church via US mail, **38 Church Dr. Guilford, VT 05301** (or consider using our online "offering plate" by going to our [church's website](#) and clicking on the Paypal Button), we are offering up our pledges for the coming year. *Please note that PayPal keeps 2% of your donation.*

So, I invite you now to take either your pledge sheets, if you haven't already sent them in, or some symbol of what you are offering this year and put it in front of you. Lay your hands on it or hold it in your hands as we Bless them together. Let us gather up all these offerings, financial as well as the offering of our time and talents, Bless and dedicate them to continuing the work of God's justice in the world.

### **Blessing the Offerings**

Loving God,  
we come to You in thanksgiving,  
knowing that all we are and all we have  
is a gift from You.  
In faith and love, help us to do Your will.  
We are listening, Lord God.  
Speak Your words into the depths of our souls,  
that we may hear You clearly.

We offer to you this day, all the facets of our lives,  
whether it be at home, at work, or at school –  
to be patient, to be merciful, to be generous, to be Holy.

Give us the wisdom and insight  
to understand Your will for us  
and the fervor to carry out our good intentions.

We offer our gifts of time, talent and possessions to You  
as a true act of faith,  
to reflect our love for You and our neighbor.

Bless all these gifts which we receive and the gifts which we, ourselves, are.  
May we be truly grateful. May we be committed to using these gifts to make a difference in the world: to increase love and justice; to decrease hatred and oppression; to expand beloved community; to share, and to keep sharing, as long as ever we can. Amen.

### **DOXOLOGY**

**CLOSING HYMN:** #477 “God of Grace and God of Glory”

Words by Harry Emerson Fosdick (1930), Music by John Hughes (1907)

*Sung by Calvin Farwell, Patty Meyer, piano*

## God of Grace and God of Glory

1. God of grace and God of glo - ry, on your peo - ple  
 2. Lo! the hosts of e - vil round us scorn your Christ, as -  
 3. Cure your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness; bend our pride to  
 4. Save us from weak res - ig - na - tion to the e - vils

pour your power; now ful - fill your church - 's sto - ry; bring its bud to  
 sail his ways! From the fears that long have bound us, free our hearts to  
 your con - trol; shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness, rich in things and  
 we de - plore; let the search for your sal - va - tion be our glo - ry

glo - rious flower. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,  
 faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,  
 poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,  
 ev - er - more. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,

for the fac - ing of this hour, for the fac - ing of this hour.  
 for the liv - ing of these days, for the liv - ing of these days.  
 lest we miss your heav'n - ly goal, lest we miss your heav'n - ly goal.  
 serv - ing you whom we a - dore, serv - ing you whom we a - dore.

**BENEDICTION**

## **THREEFOLD AMEN**

**POSTLUDE:** “You Never Give Me Your Money” by John Lennon and Paul  
McCarthy *Patty Meyer, piano*

### **Resources for additional prayer and reflection**

[What Did They Use For Money In Bible Times?](#)

[Moral Budget from the Poor People’s Campaign](#)

[UCC abolishes \\$12.9 million in medical debt in St. Louis, continuing national initiative](#)