Community Congregational Church   
of Clinton Heights, UCC

**July 30, 2023**

**The Reverend Steve Andersen**

### Welcome

### Call to Worship

One: Happy are we

**All: … when our treasures are not merely physical.**

One: Happy are we

**All: … when our knowledge is tempered by mystery.**

One: Happy are we

All: **… when our pain is held in the soothing balm of love.**

One: Happy are we

All: **… when our delight comes from beyond ourselves.**

One: Happy are we

All: **… when all have enough to eat and a safe place to sleep.**

One: Happy are we

**All: … to be together today to support each other in life’s joys and challenges.**

One: Happy are we

**All: … to be gathered to worship together.**

**Opening Prayer**

Loving and Gracious Creator,

We come before You today with open hearts and minds, seeking Your presence and guidance as we gather as a diverse community. We acknowledge Your divine presence that transcends all boundaries and unites us in this sacred space.

In a world that often feels fragmented and divided, we seek to embrace the unity that comes from acknowledging our shared humanity. We recognize that we are all interconnected, and our destinies are intertwined. Help us, O Divine Source, to see beyond our differences and find common ground in our shared experiences, hopes, and aspirations.

As we explore the topic of coping and healing in today's world, we recognize the challenges that surround us. We witness the pain, suffering, and injustices that burden our hearts. But in this moment of prayer, we turn to You, the source of comfort, strength, and solace.

Grant us the wisdom to navigate the complexities of our lives and the challenges that lie before us. Help us find inner peace amidst the chaos, hope amidst despair, and healing amidst brokenness. Guide us in embracing compassion, empathy, and understanding towards one another, regardless of our backgrounds or beliefs.

As we come together in unity, may Your divine light illuminate our paths and guide us towards the transformation and renewal that we seek. Help us recognize the power of our collective efforts in building bridges of understanding, fostering dialogue, and creating a world filled with love, justice, and harmony.

As we embark on this journey of embracing unity and coping with the difficulties of our world, we humbly ask for Your blessings and guidance. May our hearts be open to receiving Your wisdom, and may our actions reflect Your love and compassion.

We offer this prayer in the spirit of unity, acknowledging the diversity within our gathering and honoring the sacredness of each individual. May our time together be a source of inspiration, growth, and transformation.

In Your all-encompassing and loving name, we pray. Amen.

Hymn #543, Blessed Assurance

**Children’s Sermon**Title: Feeling Peaceful When Hard Things Happen

Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)

Hymn, Ancient Words

**Sermon**

Embracing Unity: Coping and Healing in Today's World

Hymn #226, He Lives

**Prayers for Others & Ourselves**

**Lord’s Prayer   
(using debts/debtors)**

**Offering**

**Doxology**

Hymn #431, Go My Children

**Announcements**

**Commission and Benediction Postlude + “Be Still.”**

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**Manage your giving online:**

Community Congregational Church is excited to announce that you can now manage your giving online! Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions and view your complete online giving history from anywhere you have access to the Internet. Simply follow these easy steps:

1) Visit the church website at **www.clintonheightsucc.org**,

2) Click on the **Donate Now** button,

3) Click on the **Create Profile** button, then

4) Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and to schedule your recurring contribution.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV): "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Let's take a closer look at 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 from the New International Version (NIV):

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

In this passage, the apostle Paul is addressing the Corinthians, encouraging them not to lose heart in the midst of their trials and challenges. He acknowledges that outwardly, they may be experiencing difficulties and the effects of time, but he offers them a profound message of hope and perspective.

Paul emphasizes that despite the outward struggles, there is an inward renewal taking place within the believers. He speaks of a continuous process of being renewed day by day. This renewal refers to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, strengthening and renewing their inner beings, their faith, and their character.

The passage goes on to explain that the troubles and afflictions experienced by believers, though they may seem heavy and overwhelming, are temporary and fleeting compared to the eternal glory that awaits them. These momentary troubles, when endured with faith and perseverance, are actually working for them, achieving an eternal weight of glory. This eternal glory refers to the ultimate reward and fulfillment in God's kingdom.

Paul encourages the Corinthians to shift their focus away from the visible and temporary circumstances around them. Instead, he urges them to fix their eyes on what is unseen—the spiritual reality, the promises of God, and the eternal hope that transcends their present struggles. By focusing on the eternal, they can find strength, perseverance, and renewed faith to navigate their challenges with confidence.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 offers a powerful reminder to believers that even in the midst of difficulties, there is an inner renewal taking place. It encourages them to persevere, knowing that their present troubles are temporary, while the eternal glory that awaits them far surpasses anything they may face. By fixing their eyes on the unseen, they can find hope, strength, and a renewed perspective on their journey of faith.