THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHESTER

An Open & Affirming Congregation of
The United Church of Christ
February 12, 10:00 a.m.
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

PREPARATION FOR THE WORD

WELCOME — Jennifer Gill, Deacon

PRELUDE — *Voluntary in A Minor* — Anonymous (18th century)

INTROIT — *Surely the Presence of the Lord is in This Place* — L. Wolfe

CALL TO WORSHIP
God is ready; let all who would worship draw near.
God, we come to you now, ready to be filled with your spirit and your word.
God also comes now to us, bringing the divine presence into the midst of humanity.
Be with us, our God, and never leave us.
In this hour, may God transform us in new and surprising ways:
God wherever you lead, give us courage to follow with heart, mind and soul. Amen.

*HYMN — *God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens* — 67

INVOCATION
O Steadfast lover of humanity, we come to you as those who seek ways of loving more wisely, more genuinely, more steadfastly. We seek to live our lives in the love of Jesus, that we might be more passionate and patient, faithful and forgiving, in loving one another and this world of many peoples. Through your spirit, build our church into a living temple, a sure sign of your presence on earth, and in us. Amen.

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON — Genesis 2.15-17, 3.1-5

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die." ' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

ANTHEM — *Sanctuary* — Larson, Thompson, Scruggs

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON — Acts 7.51-8.1

SERMON — *"Chatbot in the Pulpit"* *(A.I., A.I., Oh!)* — Rev. W. Alan Froggatt

'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'
(Genesis 2.16-17)

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

OFFERTORY — *Mercy* — Boorsma and Courtney

DOXOLOGY
Praise God from whom all blessings flow/Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God for all that love has done/Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER *("trespasses")*

POEM — *An Hymn to Humanity* — Phyllis Wheatley (1753-1784)

*HYMN — *When Stephen, Full of Power and Grace* — 478

*BLESSING & BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION RESPONSE — *Sent Forth by God's Blessing* — (tune-Ash Grove)

LOOKING AHEAD

February 12	5:00 pm	Soup Kitchen	February 16	10:00 am	Back Pack Program
				6:30 pm	Scouts – Scout Pack Meeting
				7:00 pm	**Choir Rehearsal**
February 13	5:15 pm	Scouts – Lions & Tigers	February 17	**8:15 am**	**Coffice Hours at Simon's Marketplace**
	6:30 pm	Irish Dance Group			
February 14	6:30 pm	Scouts – Arrows of Light	February 19	**10:00 am**	**Worship**
				5:00 pm	Soup Kitchen
	7:00 pm	Chester Garden Club			
February 15	6:00 pm	Scouts – Bear Den			

NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome! No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at the United Church of Chester, an Open and Affirming Church and a member of the United Church of Christ. **The United Church of Chester is centered in Christ's love, embracing, nurturing, serving all, and committed to justice and peace**.

Lenten Devotionals are available in the narthex.

Save the Date! Un-Birthday Party – February 26th following the worship service! Please sign up for a month. The sign-up sheet is in the narthex.

The deacon for the month of February is **Jennifer Gill.** The greeters this morning are **Daphne and John Stitt**. Flowers for the altar were provided by **Daphne and John Stitt**. Coffee Hour is being hosted by **Diane Lindsay**.

ALAN'S OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday-Friday 8:30 am-12:30 pm, other times by appointment

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday-Friday 9am-1pm.

The United Church of Chester

United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Church

February 12, 2023

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God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens

God, who stretched the spangled heavens infinite in time and place, flung the suns in burning radiance through the silent fields of space; we, your children, in your likeness, share inventive powers with you; Great Creator, still creating, show us what we yet may do.

We have ventured worlds undreamed of since the childhood of our race; known the ecstasy of winging through untraveled realms of space; probed the secrets of the atom, yielding unimagined power, facing us with life's destruction or our most triumphant hour.

As each far horizon beckons, may it challenge us anew, children of creative purpose, serving others, honoring you. May our dreams prove rich with promise, each endeavor, well begun; Great Creator, give us guidance till our goals and yours are one.

When Stephen, Full of Power and Grace

When Stephen, full of power and grace, went forth throughout the land, he bore no shield before his face, no weapon in his hand; but only in his heart a flame and on his lips a sword wherewith he smote and overcame the foeman of the Lord.

When Stephen preached against the laws and by those laws was tried, he had no friend to plead his cause, no spokesman at his side; but only in his heart a flame and on his eyes a light wherewith God's daybreak to proclaim and rend the veils of night.

When Stephen, young and doomed to die, fell crushed beneath the stones, he had no curse nor vengeful cry for those who broke his bones; but only in his heart a flame and on his lips a prayer that God, in sweet forgiveness' name, should understand and spare.

Let me, O God, thy cause defend. I ask you for no sword; no shield I ask, no faithful friend, no vengeance, no reward; but only in my heart a flame and in my soul a dream, so that the stones of earthly shame a jewelled crown may seem.