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THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHESTER

An Open & Affirming Congregation of
The United Church of Christ
February 16, 2025 10:00 a.m.
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

PREPARATION FOR THE WORD

WELCOME — Cheryl Archer, Deacon

PRELUDE — *Refuge* — T. Fettke

INTROIT — *The Sun is on the Sea and Shore* — J.L. Bain

CALL TO WORSHIP (from I John 4)

Beloved of God, let us love one another, because love is from God;
Everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God.
And let us love, not only in word and speech, but in truth and action.
By this, we will know that we belong to the truth, and our hearts are reassured.
We love, because God first loved us;
And this is God's commandment: all who love God, also love our brothers and sisters, for we are all children of God. Amen.

*HYMN — *Though I May Speak* — 68

Though I may speak with bravest fire, and have the gift to all inspire, and have not love, my words are vain, as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess, and striving so my love profess, but not be given by love within, the profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control, our spirits long to be made whole. Let inward love guide every deed; by this we worship, and are freed.

INVOCATION

God, you who love us beyond measure and without reservation, bless our time together this morning. Bless those we love, family and friends, neighbors and acquaintances, those we know and those we do not. Inspired by your affection and concern for us, turn our affection and concern outward toward the unlovely and unloved, toward the fearful and the desperate, toward the stranger and alien, toward the least and the lost, toward every soul that cries out to you in desperation and hope. May all people everywhere know they are your beloved children, and give us the courage and wherewithal to embody your love in all that we do and say. For the sake of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Song of Songs 2.8-13, 8.6-7

The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned.

ANTHEM *African Canticle* D. Angerman

Ed Epright, soloist

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON I Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice In wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things,2elievees all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the

partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

SERMON *"Songs of Love"* Rev. W. Alan Froggatt

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

OFFERTORY *Deep Waters* P. Choplin

*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")*

*HYMN *How Can We Name a Love* 409

How can we name a love that wakens heart and mind, in dwelling all we know or think or do or seek or find? Within our daily world, in every human face, love's echoes sound and God is found, hid in the commonplace.

If we awoke to life upheld by loving care that asked no great reward but firm, assured, was simply there, we can, with parents' names, describe, and thus adore, love unconfined, a father kind, a mother strong and sure.

When people share a task, and strength and skills unite in projects old or new, to make or do with shared delight, our Friend and Partner's will is better understood, that all should share, create, and care, and know that life is good.

So, in a hundred names, each day we all can meet a presence, sensed and shown at work, at home or in the street. Yet names and titles all shine in brighter sun: in Christ alone is love full grown and life and hope begun.

*BLESSING & BENEDICTION

BENEDICTION RESPONSE *May The Lord Go With You* A. Page

(* all who are able may stand)

LOOKING AHEAD

February 16	**10:00 am** 5:00 pm	**Worship** Soup Kitchen	February 20	8:30 am **7:00 pm**	Yoga **Choir Rehearsal**
February 17	5:30 pm	Irish Dance	February 21	**8:15 am**	**Coffice Hours – The Villager**
February 18	8:30 am 6:00 pm	Yoga Scouts	February 23	**10:00 am** 5:00 pm	**Worship** Soup Kitchen

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**.

Scout Sunday – February 23rd
Next Sunday we will be joined by the local Scout troops to celebrate Scout Sunday. As you may be aware the Scouts have been meeting at United Church of Chester for over 50 years.

This deacon for the month of February is **Cheryl Archer.** Chancel Flowers were provided by **Daphne** and **John Stitt**. You are greeted this morning by **Daphne Stitt.**

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

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