

St. Vincent UCC Worship Service
Esther's Story Sunday September 29, 2024
Pastor – Rev. Susan Hanson
Church Musician – Deb Rick

Musical Interlude
Ring of the Bell

Welcome and Announcements
Prelude Music

Let us rise for our Call to Worship



*** Call To Worship:**

Pastor: We come here to worship the Lord, who revives our soul and restores our faith. Come and be among us, O holy God, for our hearts long to know you more fully.

ALL: **Open our hearts and minds to you, O Lord. Strengthen us in your spirit, so that all we say and do in this time of worship might be pleasing to you and to your greater glory.**

Pastor: Let us join our voices together to say our affirmation of faith ...

Affirmation of Faith:

We have faith in one God, one source of life for the whole earth and all its creatures. We believe in the goodness of that source of life and claim our partnership with God to take care of his creation. We believe that, in Christ, we have been shown the way to care for all life with love and compassion and that this is our given purpose. We seek to fulfill that purpose so that our children and our children's children will live in our legacy of love. May God's Holy Spirit lead us to live in harmony for the benefit of all the generations yet to come. So be it. Amen.

Now, let us sing together our first hymn.

*** Hymn: # 436 God of Grace and God of Glory**

Call to Prayer: We are called to discipleship – to do acts of good and kindness. May we seek God's guidance for our good works in the midst of prayer and may we learn to listen for his response. Let us turn to God now, using our prayer printed in the bulletin.

Unison Prayer: **Mighty God, you have blessed us beyond measure. And so, we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care of all that you have created and love. Help us to be generous with our time, our gifts, all that we are – so that your will might be done through us in the days yet to come. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

Assurance: Much good is accomplished in this world by those who follow the ways of Jesus. Be assured brothers and sisters of the faith that God will use us to do his work, and he has promised to help us in all things. In praise, let us sing our response ...

Response: # 2016 "Glorify Thy Name"

**Father, we love you, we worship and adore you,
glorify thy name in all the earth. Glorify thy name,
glorify thy name, glorify thy name in all the earth.**

Scripture Reading:

Liturgist: Todd Sutter

Liturgist: We now turn our hearts and minds to the reading of God's Holy Scripture. Today we are sharing the story of Esther from the Old Testament book that bears her name. Esther was only one person, but she had the courage to speak up against a wrong being committed. In doing so, she saved her people from destruction.

Let us pray: Holy God, as you called Esther to have courage and save her community from harm, help us to be brave and caring about our own faith community. Give us whatever we need and send us out into the world to do your work and fulfill our purpose, in the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Reading: Once there was a good man named Mordecai. He was a faithful servant to King Ahasuerus of the Persian Empire. There came a time when the king wanted to take a wife and he asked his servants to bring all the young women in the empire before him to be considered.

In Mordecai's own home, there was a young woman named Esther. She was a cousin of Mordecai who had been orphaned and come to live with his family. She became one of the young women taken into the palace and paraded in front of the King for his consideration. When the king saw Esther, he fell in love with her and married her at once – making her his queen.

At the same time, there in the palace, the king's top official Haman was making plans to gain more power and control over the kingdom for himself. He was a dangerous man for anyone who didn't bow down to him. Mordecai was one of those people who refused. Haman was so angry that he vowed to not only destroy Mordecai and his family – but all of Mordecai's people – the Jews.

Esther, like her cousin Mordecai, was a Jew. But the king didn't know this. He had assumed she was Persian like him. Now Esther was afraid for her people. She was afraid for herself and didn't want to reveal that she was also a Jew. But God put a brave heart inside of her. And she knew what she had to do.

Esther used her position as the queen to help her people. She invited the king and Haman to a great banquet. There, she revealed Haman's plot to kill all the Jews to the king and pleaded for her life and the lives of her people.

The king punished Haman and made Mordecai his new top official. Mordecai proved to be a good and faithful servant to this Persian king. And he was proud of Esther because the Jews were saved when this one woman had the courage to speak out to help others.

Liturgist: Here ends the reading of God's Holy Scripture. May God bless us with understanding, and may we show our understanding in the way we live our lives. Amen.

Now, let's sing our hymn, # 2130 The Summons

Hymn: # 2130 The Summons

Pastor's Message: "Courage for the Community"

Response: # 2176 Make Me A Servant

**Make me a servant, humble and meek.
Lord, let me lift up those who are weak.
And may the prayer of my heart always be:
Make me a servant, make me a servant, make me a servant today.**

Pastoral Prayer / The Lord's Prayer

Offering Invitation: We bring with us today our good intentions and deepest desires to follow the ways of Jesus and to be the fulfillment of God's vision for our church. Let us present to God all this and more in the form of our morning offering.

Offertory

* **Response: # 370 "What Gift Can We Bring"** (vs. 4)

**This gift we now bring, this present, this token,
these words can convey it, the joy of this day!
When grateful we come, remembering, rejoicing,
this song we now offer in honor and praise!**

* **Prayer of Dedication:** O God, accept these gifts now placed on your altar. May they be symbols of all that we have to offer more fully to you. We dedicate them to your use in the name of Jesus. Amen.

* **Hymn: # 24 The God of Abraham Praise**

* **Benediction:** Let us go forth in joy, ready to share with the world our gifts of time, talent, and treasure with which God has blessed our lives. And remember, wherever we go, God goes with us, giving us everything we need for the journey and more. Amen.

* **Response: # 2241 "The Spirit Sends Us Forth"** (vs. 4)

* **Postlude Music**