

SUNDAY WORSHIP

August 9, 2026 ~ 10:30am

Mission Statement: As a community of faith, we welcome all who seek understanding. • As a community of hope, we offer friendship and comfort to those in need. • As a community of love, we provide caring support and shared fellowship to all

WE ARE A COMMUNITY CHURCH. OUR FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS AND MEMBERS COME FROM MANY PLACES AND MULTIPLE FAITH TRADITIONS. EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO FIND A SPIRITUAL SANCTUARY HERE.

— ANNOUNCEMENTS & WELCOME —

CENTERING MUSIC

Sharon Novak

CALL TO WORSHIP

by Rev. Gail Doktor

One: We come to this place like the ancient Greeks of Paul's day. We come as skeptics and believers, sometimes seeking, always spiritual, and maybe religious, too.

People: *Yet sometimes we mistake our worship of false gods — idols — for faith in what is righteous.*

One: We live in a world filled with idols to which we devote our time, our energy, our means. Even our hopes and dreams.

People: *Idols are those things that we pray will offer success, security, or satisfaction; idols are those things that we beg to take away our pain or fill our emptiness.*

One: Whether we are distracted by social media or disoriented by substances, idols demand too much spending or consuming of ourselves and everything that matters to us.

People: *Idols come in the form of people or passions that recklessly deplete our reserves, resources, and relationships.*

One: Such idols take hold of our thoughts and actions, until they become demanding, dangerous, or destructive.

People: *Such idols separate us from God through abuse, imbalance, impulse, inequality, or obsession; they disrupt holy and sustainable connections.*

One: This morning, Paul calls our attention to the altar of the unknown God. He points beyond it to the One from whom our hope and our healing springs: embodied Presence, guiding Spirit, and boundless Grace. He reminds us that Love needs no temple, no altar: it makes a home in our hearts and minds.

People: *O God, help us follow the Way, so that we may serve You, rather than seeking idols.*

One: Lead us beyond the small deaths and deep losses that come with our focus on false gods.

People: *Turning to where Paul points, past the altar of the unknown God, may we instead find You, who created us and now claim us all over again.*

All: *As we meet You in this place, resurrect us and renew us through your Love, so that we may experience holistic belonging and healthy purpose.*

*SONG [Blue Book] *It Only Takes a Spark* Sharon Novak

— PRAYING —

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & MOMENT OF SILENCE

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, 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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and glory forever. *Amen.*

— REFLECTING —

SCRIPTURE

Acts 17:16-34

MESSAGE

THE ALTAR OF
THE UNKNOWN GOD

Rev. Gail Doktor

*SONG #68

Though I May Speak

Sharon Novak

— OFFERING —

OFFERING

*SONG #44

Doxology

Sharon Novak

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

— CLOSING —

SONG

May the love of God live in us today, may the love of God live in us today.

May the warmth we feel within us show in all we do and say.

May the love of God live in us today.

May the peace of God be with us today,

May the peace of God be with us today.

May it guide us and protect us, as we go our separate ways.

May the peace of God be with us, May the love of God live in us,

May the love of God shine through us today.

BENEDICTION

Rev. Gail Doktor

SUNDAY WORSHIP

10:30am • August 9, 2026



JACKSON COMMUNITY CHURCH, UCC
JACKSON, NH

SCRIPTURE

ACTS 17:16-34—Paul in Athens

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him.

Some said, “*What does this pretentious babbler want to say?*” Others said, “*He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.*” (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, “*May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.*” Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “*Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live*

and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we, too, are his offspring.’

“Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed, but others said, “*We will hear you again about this.*” At that point Paul left them. But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

PRAYERS

For PEOPLE: Alexa, Allison, Ana, Annie, Ariana, Ashley family, Bette D., Bill M., Bob C., Bob G., Brianna & baby Addie, ‘Doc’ G. & Cindi G., Cindy K., Corky, Deb L., Hannah, Huntley, Jenn, Jeremiah, Jess, Judy B., Kailee, Karen, Kim W., Kate & Rusty, Larry, Liberty, Mary, baby Miles, Mike, Nancy, Nat & baby June, baby Noelle, Nyesa, Rob, Ruth, Scamp, Steve, Sue C., Tom, and baby Quinn N. For those serving as first responders, for those serving on the front lines of public health and safety, for those deployed and on active military duty. For our leaders. For those grieving. For our adversaries and enemies.

For PLACES: For Chikanga Church in Mutare, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and communities in Honduras. For hurting places in the world, wounded by natural disasters or human-made causes and conflicts.