



First United Methodist Church of Moweaqua

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Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors. The People of the First United Methodist Church.

Self - Guided worship For July 11, 2021

You may go at your own pace. Some ideas for centering yourself for worship: Set a particular time and a particular place. Light a candle as you begin and extinguish it as you end. Set aside a place in your home that is quiet, perhaps even a space where that is the only thing that will happen in that space- a spot in a spare bedroom, a corner of the living room, or a place that can be changed and used at the time. Turn off distractions like the TV or the computer. Take some deep centering breaths as you begin. Take your time and be present to the Holy Spirit at work in you.

Opening Sentences

All the earth belongs to God. Let me lift up my head and praise God. Who shall ascend God's holy hill? Those with clean hands and pure hearts.

Psalm Reading

Psalm 24

Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, you have kindled in my heart a great faith that I may endure great bodily suffering: Grant that the sweetness of sin may fade in me so I may glow with the warmth of love for you. It is your destiny for me that I should spend my life in praise to your glory. Yet so often how I live out that destiny becomes very narrow. Forgive my selfishness and restore me to joy. O God hear my prayers for I offer them in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord.

Time of Silent Prayer

Assurance of Forgiveness

Accept the good news, Christ died for me while I was yet a sinner; that proves God's love toward me. In the name of Jesus Christ, I have been forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Lord, open my heart and mind by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as I read these scriptures I may hear with joy what you say to me today. Amen.

First Lesson: Ephesians 1:3-14

Second Lesson: Mark 6:7-13

Meditation on the Scripture: See meditation page

Offering (You may wish to place your offering in a prominent place at this time as a symbol of bringing it before God and then mail it later)

Offertory Prayer:

Most gracious and loving God, you give me all good things. You sent me your son that I might know of your great love for me. May I give to you as generously as you have given to me. Bless my offering today as I come before you. Magnify my efforts that through what I offer, your name may be glorified and those in need may hear your words, and see your face. I pray today in the name of your son Jesus the risen Christ. Amen.

Prayer for Joys and Concerns:

Most Powerful God, May the words I bring this day be of praise and adoration. Help me to discern the needs of others. Aid me to be a giver and not a user, giving generously as you have given to me. Raise me up from death to new life in you. I continue to lift in prayer those who are ill and suffering, those who I name before you and know personally, and those who only you know to need healing. I lift to you those whose hearts are breaking this day because they have lost loved ones to death. Give them comfort in the words and actions I share. Continue to give me a sense of wisdom and calm as I live and work in my community of church and school and work. Bless those who I name before you _____ . I give thanks for the joys that I have encountered this week. The joy of celebrating birthdays for _____ and anniversaries for _____. The joys of graduations and the joys of planting season are all around me, help me to enjoy them. The simple joy of knowing I live in a community that cares for me. As I go into this week give me the strength and courage to face unafraid each day knowing you are beside me. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

Benediction:

May the love of God, the peace of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be mine today and always. Amen.

Scriptures:

Ephesians 1:3-14 Common English Bible (CEB)

3 Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven. 4 God chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in God's presence before the creation of the world. 5 God destined us to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ because of his love. This was according to his goodwill and plan 6 and to honor his glorious grace that he has given to us freely through the Son whom he loves. 7 We have been ransomed through his Son's blood, and we have forgiveness for our failures based on his overflowing grace, 8 which he poured over us with wisdom and understanding. 9 God revealed his hidden design[a] to us, which is according to his goodwill and the plan that he intended to accomplish through his Son. 10 This is what God planned for the climax of all times: to bring all things together in Christ, the things in heaven along with the things on earth. 11 We have also received an inheritance in Christ. We were destined by the plan of God, who accomplishes everything according to his design. 12 We are called to be an honor to God's glory because we were the first to hope in Christ. 13 You too heard the word of truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ. 14 The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God's own people, resulting in the honor of God's glory.

Mark 6:7-13 Common English Bible (CEB)

1 Jesus left that place and came to his hometown. His disciples followed him. 2 On the Sabbath, he began to teach in the synagogue. Many who heard him were surprised. "Where did this man get all this? What's this wisdom he's been given? What about the powerful acts accomplished through him? 3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't he Mary's son and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" They were repulsed by him and fell into sin.

4 Jesus said to them, "Prophets are honored everywhere except in their own hometowns, among their relatives, and in their own households." 5 He was unable to do any miracles there, except that he placed his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 He was appalled by their disbelief.

Psalms 24 Common English Bible (CEB)

1 The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants too.
2 Because God is the one who established it on the seas; God set it firmly on the waters.
3 Who can ascend the Lord's mountain? Who can stand in his holy sanctuary?
4 Only the one with clean hands and a pure heart; the one who hasn't made false promises, the one who hasn't sworn dishonestly.
5 That kind of person receives blessings from the Lord and righteousness from the God who saves.
6 And that's how things are with the generation that seeks him— that seeks the face of Jacob's God.
7 Mighty gates: lift up your heads! Ancient doors: rise up high! So the glorious king can enter!
8 Who is this glorious king? The Lord—strong and powerful! The Lord—powerful in battle!
9 Mighty gates: lift up your heads! Ancient doors: rise up high! So the glorious king can enter!
10 Who is this glorious king? The Lord of heavenly forces— he is the glorious king! Selah

Meditation:

A California realtor once persuaded famed comedian Groucho Marx to inspect a palatial ocean-front estate that was for sale. The realtor drove Groucho up the mile-long, beautifully landscaped approach. He escorted him through the house, the stables, the gardens, the kennels, demonstrating the many beautiful features of the dream palace by the sea. Groucho patiently plodded after him, nodding sternly from time to time, apparently much impressed. Finally, he was ushered out on the flagstone terrace as the salesman waved proudly toward the broad expanse of the Pacific. "Now, what do you think?" he challenged. "I don't care for it," replied Groucho. "Take away the ocean, and now what have you got?"

The story becomes a parable on the actual value of our Christian discipleship. We may know the Bible from cover to cover. We may be well-informed in theology. We may know all the sacred hymns by heart. We may be regular Churchgoers. We may be generous with our time in Church activities and generous with our weekly offerings. We may be able to speak in tongues. But take away love, and what have we got? In the Apostle Paul's words, "if we do not have love, we are nothing." To be effective members of this Christian Community – to be effective disciples of Jesus Christ, effective witnesses to the reality of the Divine Presence in the world, we must do everything in the Spirit of Love.

Speaking of reality, there's a simplistic little test circulating the internet that promises to tell you if you are a realist or an idealist. The test prompts you to pair a word with a color. For example, you are asked to match the word FEAR, or PEACE, or EARTH from a grid of various colors. And at the end of the quiz, you receive your score — identifying you as either a Realist or Idealist. Seems silly, but it makes you think, am I a realist or an idealist?

A well-known Christian preacher once met a famous Russian actress. "I suppose you are a religious man?" she asked. "Yes," he replied, "I suppose I am." "Aha!" said the actress, "you are religious because you are weak. You want someone to hold your hand. You want God to hold your hand." The clergyman told the woman that she had it all wrong. And he gave her some examples. I don't ask God to wipe the tears from my eyes. Instead, I want God to provide me with the compassion to wipe the tears from other people's eyes. I don't ask God to hold my hand. No, I want God to give me the moral strength to reach down and lift the fallen and the outcast.

"Then are you an idealist?" asked the actress.

"I suppose I am," said the preacher. At which point, the actress waved him away, saying, "I am a realist."

"That got me thinking," the preacher said later. "Am I a realist or just an idealist? Is Christianity just a beautiful idea, or is it real? Does it work?"

In today's Gospel Lesson, Mark tells us that Jesus "summoned the twelve, and began to send them out in pairs." There, they were to discover if Christianity is just a beautiful idea or if it works. "So, they set off to preach repentance" (Mk. 6:7,12). This was the beginning of their ministry, which, as we know, grew incredibly effective after they had lived through the events of the Cross and Resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. There they were: a handful of men commissioned to go out and turn the world upside down. Can you imagine how they felt? Indeed, it must have gotten them thinking. But they were learning from Jesus. They were getting in on the secret: God was with them in the struggle.

Every Christian is commissioned to a ministry of love and justice in the name of Jesus Christ. The new life into which God is calling each one of us includes our participation as ministers of the Gospel, priests of the Lord. Whatever our vocation may be -- webmaster, lawyer, marketer, doctor, homemaker, musician, whatever – we are, each of us, at the same time a full-time minister of Jesus Christ out in the world.

In the Gospel of John, we read the description of the Pentecost Event in which Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection from the tomb. The disciples, fearing for their lives, are in hiding. Suddenly, miraculously, Jesus is standing among them. Jesus speaks, and they are filled with joy as they hear Him say, "Peace be with you! As the Father sent Me, so I am sending you. Then Jesus breathes on them and says, Receive the Holy Spirit" .

In so doing, the risen Christ empowers each of them for evangelizing -- commissioned to go forth in peace, in the Spirit of the Lord God, in the Spirit of Love. And again, as we read in today's Lesson, it is not long before it is being said of them, "They are turning the world upside down!"

When we gather as a community to worship, God gathers us together to experience the immediacy of God's presence. This means drawing closer to God, as a group together and as individuals . This is our great gift from Jesus: we can enter a deep communion with God in this unique, life-enriching way because we are Jesus' followers. But this "gathering together" is not the total experience. There is a second part to it, without which the first part loses its meaning.

The same God who gathers us to experience the sacred presence of God also scatters us into the world to witness God's divine love. The same God who is revealed to us here is revealed to the world through us. The same God who makes it possible for us to breathe in -- to receive the Holy Spirit requires us to breathe the Holy Spirit out. If we only breathe in and never breathe out, in this sense, the Holy Spirit has no real meaning in our lives. Spiritually, we are dead.

"Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs" (Mk.6:7). The Gospels tell us, repeatedly, that the God who loves us so much — the God who has given us so much through Jesus Christ — is calling us to a higher purpose as we are sent out to share this Jesus with the world. To the whole creation — to family, neighbor, friend, stranger, even enemy -- to all nations everywhere, we are commissioned to the highest purpose of all. And that is to speak the name of Jesus, wherever we may be.

Though we may be regular Churchgoers, generous with our time in Church activities, and can speak in tongues -- take away love, and what have we got? In the Apostle Paul's words, "if we do not have love, we are nothing." To be effective members of this Christian Community – to be effective disciples of Jesus Christ -- to be effective witnesses to the ultimate reality of the divine presence of God in the world, we must do everything in the Spirit of Love.