



# **First United Methodist Church of Moweaqua**

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

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## **Self - Guided worship For July 18, 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**

I cry to the Lord, "You are my God, You are the rock of my salvation." God's faithfulness and steadfast love is with me, and in God's name I am exalted.

### **Psalm Reading**

Psalm 89

### **Prayer of Confession**

Holy most high and awesome God, who dwells in the holy place: Make me holy and bring me near; cleanse me from all defilement that I may worship you worthily, for you are the One who blesses and makes holy all things. I have occasion to wander off like a sheep without a shepherd and slip back into old habits and old ways. Have mercy on me, O God, forgive my foolishness and set me once again upon the solid foundation of Christ. I seek to hear and answer the tasks to which you call me. So now hear me as I pray in the name of Christ the 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 2:11-22

**Second Lesson:** Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

**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 2:11-22 Common English Bible (CEB)**

11 So remember that once you were Gentiles by physical descent, who were called “uncircumcised” by Jews who are physically circumcised. 12 At that time you were without Christ. You were aliens rather than citizens of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of God’s promise. In this world you had no hope and no God. 13 But now, thanks to Christ Jesus, you who once were so far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us. 15 He canceled the detailed rules of the Law so that he could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace. 16 He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God.

17 When he came, he announced the good news of peace to you who were far away from God and to those who were near. 18 We both have access to the Father through Christ by the one Spirit. 19 So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. Rather, you are fellow citizens with God’s people, and you belong to God’s household. 20 As God’s household, you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 The whole building is joined together in him, and it grows up into a temple that is dedicated to the Lord. 22 Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

### **Mark 6:30-34,53-56 Common English Bible (CEB)**

30 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught. 31 Many people were coming and going, so there was no time to eat. He said to the apostles, “Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while.” 32 They departed in a boat by themselves for a deserted place.

33 Many people saw them leaving and recognized them, so they ran ahead from all the cities and arrived before them. 34 When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things. 53 When Jesus and his disciples had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret, anchored the boat, 54 and came ashore. People immediately recognized Jesus 55 and ran around that whole region bringing sick people on their mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 Wherever he went—villages, cities, or farming communities—they would place the sick in the marketplaces and beg him to allow them to touch even the hem of his clothing. Everyone who touched him was healed.

## Psalm 89 Common English Bible (CEB)

- 1 I will sing of the Lord's loyal love forever. I will proclaim your faithfulness with my own mouth from one generation to the next.
- 2 That's why I say, "Your loyal love is rightly built—forever! You establish your faithfulness in heaven."
- 3 You said, "I made a covenant with my chosen one; I promised my servant David:
- 4 'I will establish your offspring forever; I will build up your throne from one generation to the next.'"
- 5 Heaven thanks you for your wondrous acts, Lord— for your faithfulness too—in the assembly of the holy ones.
- 6 Is there any in the sky who could compare to the Lord? Who among the gods is equal to the Lord?
- 7 God is respected in the council of the holy ones; God is awesome and revered more than all those around him.
- 8 Who is like you, Lord God of heavenly forces? Mighty Lord, your faithfulness surrounds you!
- 9 You rule over the surging sea: When its waves rise up, it's you who makes them still.
- 10 It's you who crushed Rahab like a dead body; you scattered your enemies with your strong arm.
- 11 Heaven is yours! The earth too! The world and all that fills it— you made all of it! North and South—you created them!
- 12 The mountains Tabor and Hermon shout praises to your name.
- 13 You have a powerful arm; your hand is strong; your strong hand is raised high!
- 14 Your throne is built on righteousness and justice; loyal love and faithfulness stand in front of you.
- 15 The people who know the celebratory shout are truly happy! They walk in the light of your presence, Lord!
- 16 They rejoice in your name all day long and are uplifted by your righteousness
- 17 because you are the splendor of their strength. By your favor you make us strong
- 18 because our shield is the Lord's own; our king belongs to the holy one of Israel!
- 19 Once you spoke in a vision to your faithful servants: I placed a crown on a strong man.  
I raised up someone specially chosen from the people.
- 20 I discovered my servant David. I anointed him with my holy oil.
- 21 My hand will sustain him— yes, my arm will strengthen him!
- 22 No enemy will oppress him; no wicked person will make him suffer.
- 23 I will crush all his foes in front of him. I will strike down all those who hate him.
- 24 My faithfulness and my loyal love will be with him. He will be strengthened by my name.
- 25 I will set his hand on the sea. I will set his strong hand on the rivers.
- 26 He will cry out to me: "You are my father, my God, the rock of my salvation."
- 27 Yes, I'll make him the one born first— I'll make him the high king of all earth's kings.
- 28 I will always guard my loyal love toward him. My covenant with him will last forever.
- 29 I will establish his dynasty for all time. His throne will last as long as heaven does.
- 30 But if his children ever abandon my Instruction, stop following my rules—
- 31 if they treat my statutes like dirt, stop keeping my commandments—
- 32 then I will punish their sin with a stick,  
and I will punish their wrongdoing with a severe beating.
- 33 But even then I won't withdraw my loyal love from him. I won't betray my faithfulness.
- 34 I won't break my covenant. I won't renege on what crossed my lips.
- 35 By my own holiness I've sworn one thing: I will not lie to David.
- 36 His dynasty will last forever. His throne will be like the sun, always before me.

## **Psalm 89 (cont'd)**

37 It will be securely established forever; like the moon, a faithful witness in the sky. Selah  
38 But you, God, have rejected and despised him. You've become infuriated with your anointed one.  
39 You've canceled the covenant with your servant. You've thrown his crown in the dirt.  
40 You've broken through all his walls. You've made his strongholds a pile of ruins.  
41 All those who pass by plunder him. He's nothing but a joke to his neighbors.  
42 You lifted high his foes' strong hand. You gave all his enemies reason to celebrate.  
43 Yes, you dulled the edge of his sword and didn't support him in battle.  
44 You've put an end to his splendor. You've thrown his throne to the ground.  
45 You've shortened the prime of his life. You've wrapped him up in shame. Selah  
46 How long will it last, Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?  
47 Remember how short my life is! Have you created humans for no good reason?  
48 Who lives their life without seeing death? Who is ever rescued from the grip of the grave? Selah  
49 Where now are your loving acts from long ago, my Lord— the same ones you promised to David  
by your own faithfulness?  
50 Remember your servant's abuse, my Lord! Remember how I bear in my heart  
all the insults of the nations,  
51 the ones your enemies, Lord, use— the ones they use to abuse every step your anointed one  
takes.  
52 Bless the Lord forever! Amen and Amen!

## **Meditation:**

During the Pandemic, we were all confronted with many challenges, including reimagining the classroom. While some students adapted well, others did not. In that connection, I know there are parents here today who will relate to the following story adapted from a story in A.F. Wedel's "Prepare the Way":

At a large university commencement exercise, the School's President rose to address the graduates and confer their degrees. He began by explaining the meaning of the traditional Latin phrases used to rank their performance.

For example, if a student graduates "Cum Laude," it means "With Honors."

Next, he explained that "Magna Cum Laude" translates "With High Honors. And if a student graduates "Summa Cum Laude," it designates "With Supreme Honors."

"But," he continued, "there's a new honor I plan to use in the future to be called 'Magna Cum Pellidentium,' which means 'By the skin of your teeth.'"

Living as we do, in this complex world of ours, we sometimes feel that in so many ways, we're holding on by the skin of our teeth. Or, in the words of Lewis Carroll (best known as the author of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland), "The hurrier I go, the behinder I get." And we feel the need to slow down, back off for a while, or simply get away from it all. We feel the need for some quiet time in which to think, maybe even to pray.

In today's Gospel Lesson, having been sent out by Jesus in pairs, the disciples return and report to Jesus "all that they had done and taught." And Jesus says to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest awhile." Mark tells us that they had been so busy that "they had no leisure, even to eat" (Mk. 6:31). In Jesus' opinion, they needed a little time to rest and to reflect. And so, "they went away" by boat, "to a lonely place by themselves" (Mk. 6:32).

When our lives become too full and too fast, we have the same need to back off and relax. We need a little solitude in which to think things over. We need a little time to reflect on the meaning of whatever we're doing and the direction in which we're going.

We want to do that, but "there's never any time," we tell ourselves. We're victims of the "unfinished business" syndrome that permeates modern society. Time for quiet, prayerful reflection isn't available, or so we imagine. Yet, what can be more important than learning to appreciate and fully understand the significance of our own lives?

Some, of course, realize the importance of regular "quiet time" and practice some form of regular, prayerful meditation. But, regrettably, most of us are still hurried, worried, and "too busy" for that sort of thing. It comes down to a matter of priorities. The stuff at the top of our priority list gets done; the bottom is neglected. Consequently, if the need for a time of quiet, prayerful reflection becomes a high priority, we won't have to find time for it; we'll make time and let something else go.

As for the "How?" of such serious reflection, it is probably best for us to devise our own time and place and way of evaluating our lives and revising our goals. Why not take a good look at your calendar? Why not mark some dates and times on it? Surely your "quiet time" deserves at least equal billing with binge-watching the latest Netflix series.

A man with a deeply troubled spirit withdrew to a lonely place and prayed intensely for help. He pleaded for the strength and wisdom he needed to cope with the aimless quality of his life. He listened for a long time for an answer, but none came. Finally, he began to hear an old religious song singing itself in the back of his mind. He hadn't heard it for years, and only one phrase of the song was clear: "Near to the heart of God." He could hear the tune, but he could hear none of the words, except those six: "Near to the heart of God." And within a few minutes, his troubled spirit was at rest. In his time of solitude, he had drawn near to the heart of God. He was in conversation with God. He felt as though he was on the same wavelength with God. And his quiet time was a time to listen.

Just six words, "Near to the heart of God." That's where you need to be. That's where we all need to be.

There is a place, a silent, holy place where God descends and speaks to you. Take time to listen. That is the essence of prayer. Until you make that God-connection at the center of your being, all else is just noise.

From the pen of an anonymous poet:  
I got up early one morning,

and rushed right into the day;  
I had so much to accomplish,  
I didn't have time to pray.

Trouble swirled around me,  
and heavier came each task,  
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered,  
He answered, "You didn't ask!"

I wanted to see joy and beauty,  
but the day toiled grey and bleak.  
I called on the Lord for a reason,  
He said, "You didn't seek!"

A man was invited to his daughter's home for his favorite Sunday dinner. When the meal was over, he announced that he would take a walk through the neighborhood to burn off the big feast he had just devoured. "I'll be back in fifteen minutes," he said. Two hours had passed before he returned.

"Sorry I'm late," he said, "but I ran into an old friend, and he just wouldn't stop listening."

We, believers, talk a lot about prayer. We talk a lot about prayer as our means of talking to God, asking God, thanking God, and praising God. But do you realize how futile it is to seek communion with God in prayer without listening as well? God is constantly trying to communicate with us. We don't have to ask God for attention. We already have it, and we have God's promise never to withhold it, not even for one split second. Our problem is not one of trying to get God to listen. Ours is the problem of being "too busy" to listen. Take time to listen, and you will hear God's message pulsating down into the depths of your being. Take time to listen, and you will come to accept God's answers to your prayers without reservation, even though they may be contrary to your expectations.

We are members of a Servant-Church -- a People of God who know how to meet others at the point of their needs -- a People of God who know how to listen to others because we have first listened to God.

"Near to the heart of God." Near enough to listen! Near enough to learn what it takes to be effective Christian witnesses.

Just six little words: Near to the heart of God. That's where you need to be. And that's where we all need to be.