

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE – with HOLY COMMUNION
August 7, 2022
WORDS OF WELCOME/CELEBRATING AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

INTROIT: Hymn #70 v. 1 “God Is Here! As We Your People Meet”

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CALL TO WORSHIP: ☪*

L: Creator resides in the midst of creation...calling us to this community.

C: Our world waits for the Holy One, our help and shield.

L: God our Righteousness gazes upon the beloved with delight and concern.

C: Our bodies wait for the Holy One, our help and shield.

L: The Spirit of the Living God greets us with fresh winds and new mercies.

C: Our souls wait for the Holy One, our help and shield.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION: ☪*

L: Abundant God, we wait for you with longing, hope, and anticipation.

May your kingdom be realized in this community. May your people be your ambassadors.

All: May your love be our propeller in the world and our beacon to direct us home.

Fill us with the bread of life and nourish our spirits to be your good news in the world. Amen.

GATHERING HYMN: #70 v.v. 2 – 3 “God Is Here! As We Your People Meet”

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PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE: ☪*

L: Gracious God, you have created a world of abundance and flourishing. Every resource, every gift, every product originates from the generosity of your creation and the creativity you have bestowed upon us.

All: Forgive us for the times we misuse and overuse of your gifts. As we spend time in silence, reveal to us where our attitudes and actions have become miserly attitudes toward the plentiful trove of resources you have entrusted to our care.

L: As we come before you with open minds and hearts,

All: Sow generosity in us, reveal abundance to us, and enable flourishing through us. Amen.

Moment of Silent Confession & Reflection

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S GRACE: ☪*

L: Every good and perfect gift comes from above. Grace is such a gift; mercy is another. Transformation and new life descend freely from the Most High to all who would receive it. Receive the assurance of God’s grace and compassion as precious treasure made available to all.

DOXOLOGY: #778

**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.**

SCRIPTURE:

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Hebrews 11:1-3, 7

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

⁷ By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

Luke 12:32-40

³² “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Watchful Slaves

³⁵ “Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶ be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes during the middle of the night or near dawn and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

³⁹ “But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

TIME OF REFLECTION:

Heirs and Stewards
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 Luke 12:32-40

³² “Do not be afraid, little flock,
for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

(Luke 12:32)

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.”

(Hebrews 11:1)

Have you ever struggled with your faith? Though its author is unknown and it is unsure whether or not it is a letter or a sermon, the one thing that is clear is its purpose. The book of Hebrews was written especially for those who were struggling with their faith reminding them of all God had done through the ages and of the people of faith who had gone before them whose actions were guided by faith in God’s guidance and promises. Though they died before witnessing complete fulfillment of the promise, they saw the beginnings of it being fulfilled. Though they met with hard times, they continued to let their faith in God and God’s promises guide their actions.

Is anyone willing to share a story of faith that has helped impact your faith either biblical, faithful throughout the ages or modern day? For me, biblically, Moses has had a big impact on my life. Though he kept questioning his ability to carry out that which God had planned for him, God did not give up on him, God may have given him extra assistance just to assure Moses that yes he could carry out God's plan but he didn't give up on him. When things got tough, he didn't hesitate to ask God I'm doing everything just as you said and it appears things are getting worse not better. Though Moses never crossed over into the Promised Land, he saw it from a distance and knew those he was called to set free would enter. Though my strength comes from the empowerment of God's Holy Spirit, it is testimonies like that of Moses that help make that empowerment real and tangible for me.

A modern-day person of faith that has had a major influence on my life and many others through his writings is Quinn Caldwell who is one of the Stillspeaking writers for the UCC's various devotionals. In one of his devotionals, he shares some words that he uses for every communion service that we all could benefit from hearing. *"The first time Jesus sat down to this meal, among those gathered there were one who would doubt him, one who would deny him, one who would betray him, and they would all leave him alone before that night was over—and he knew it. Still he sat down and ate with them. If he ate with them, surely he's ready to eat with us—baptized or not, confessed or not, Christian or not, sure or not, believer or not, saint or sinner or a little of both. All you have to be to eat at this table is hungry; God will do the rest. All things are ready; come and get it."*¹ (Quinn Caldwell, 2013, p. 8) He then goes on to share how *"A prison chaplain told me that he had 'stolen' those lines and begun using them when he celebrated communion at the prison. More than once, prisoners who had never done so before had come forward to receive communion. With tears in their eyes, they told him that they'd assumed that their crimes had made them unwelcome at the table. They'd heard others invite them, but had never believed it until the chaplain reminded them who Jesus himself used to eat with. 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them'?"*² (Quinn Caldwell, 2013, p. 8) He then closes the devotion with these words and prayer. *"I sure hope that's true; it's our only hope. Come, God, come. Preside at every table where I will eat today, and do not turn away the sinners, for I don't want to go hungry. Amen"*³ (Quinn Caldwell, 2013, p. 8) He has a way of sharing the faith and promises of God that allows those who could not hear or believe them now are able to do so. One thing that all people of faith have in common past, present, and those in the future is that they had, have, or will have been handed on the faith by those who had gone before them so they are heirs of the promise, but with that they also were, are, or will be stewards of the promise in that they too passed, are passing, or will pass it on to others.

The United Church of Christ has a Statement of Faith that I would like for us to say together. It is on the PowerPoint or you can follow along in the Hymnal #885.

United Church of Christ Statement of Faith in the form of a doxology

(http://www.ucc.org/beliefs_statement-of-faith#DOX)

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.

Amen.

This Statement of Faith not only recalls only what God has done and God's promises, but also recognizes God's call on our lives. Like the saints of old, we are both heirs and stewards of the promise. So in moving forward on our pilgrimage of life how do we live into the promise, --- to claim our heritage --- and pass it on to others? I think it is important to remember often what God has done and what God desires in order to encourage us in times of trial to not give up; to remember and hang on to God's promises and desires like "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32). Part of experiencing that kingdom is noticing God's presence and kingdom here on earth. It is a constant turning to God and seeking God's will and allowing that --- and not our desire to be in control of everything --- to guide our actions. It is about sharing in the sacraments and noticing the love of God and the presence of the living Christ in the sacraments and in one another.

Some of you have been lifetime members of this church while others of you came from other churches for various reasons often times moving into the area while others needed a new church home because your church closed. However you came to this place, God led you here for a reason and I pray you come not only because you feel welcome but that you know that welcome you feel is the presence of God being lived out in the lives of those present. We have all heard the saying you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink. That is true. Sometimes water is brought to a thirsty horse, but the same is true, we can't make it drink. As we seek to be good stewards of the promise that has been handed on to us may we faithfully share the Bread of Life, The Living Water both within and beyond this place of worship knowing that we cannot force anyone to drink of the Living Water or Eat from the Bread of Life, --- but we certainly can offer it, again, and again, and again.

Surely the presence of God is in this place, I can feel the great I Am's power and grace. You came to us in Jesus Christ and offered us the Bread of Life, The Living Water, the Cup of Salvation. Then you sent your Holy Spirit to remind us all that Christ taught and to empower us live as you would have us live. You have transformed our lives. Help us to continue to embrace what is your good pleasure to give us so that we too may share that gift and promise with others. In faith, especially when the going gets tough, let us hold on to the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Help us to be open to seek your guidance in the when, where, and how you would have us share your promises and message in this time and place. All glory and honor be yours all-knowing God, Father/Mother, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amenⁱ

A TIME OF PRAYER – LIFTING UP PRAYER REQUESTS – THE LORD'S PRAYER

COMMUNION HYMN: Hymn #349 v.v. 1, 3 & 4 "I Come with Joy"

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THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

*Invitation

*Communion Prayer

Pastor: God be with you.

C: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to God.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to God Most High.

C: We freely give God thanks and praise.

Pastor: We thank you God for your calling forth of all creation, the beauty and bounty of the earth and for the vision of a day when sharing by all will mean scarcity for none.

We remember your covenants and give you thanks for all our ancestors of faith. We rejoice that you call us to reconciliation with you and to all people everywhere and that you remain faithful to your covenant even when we stray.

We rejoice that you call the whole human family to this table of both sacrifice and victory. We thank you for the Holy Spirit who leads us into truth, defends us in adversity, and gathers us from every people to unite us in one holy church. So, we unite our voices with the entire family of your faithful people everywhere saying:

*All: Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory,
O God Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God!
Hosanna in the highest!*

Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of the Wine

(Words of Institution)

Blessing

Holy God, descend your Spirit upon these gifts of grain and grape that they might be for us the presence of the living Christ and pour out your Spirit upon us so that we might be reflections of your likeness in a hurting world so that others might know the blessings of living in communion with you, one another and all of creation.

Through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours Almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

Sharing in the Meal

Prayer of Thanksgiving

*All: We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have Refreshed us at your table
by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. By the power of your Holy Spirit, keep us
faithful to your will. Go with us - to the streets and to our homes, to our places of labor and
leisure That whether we are gathered or scattered, we may be the servant church of the
servant Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY: *

L: Luke 12:34 informs us, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
Guided by the Spirit, may our hearts direct the use of our resources, our time, and our talents.

*All: May our generosity meet God’s abundance
in attending to the needs and hopes of our community and beyond.*

HYMN OF DEDICATION:#70 v. 4 “*God Is Here! As We Your People Meet*”

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PRAYER OF DEDICATION: *

L: Generous One, receive the gifts we bring as we return a portion of your treasure
to the use of your kindom.

*All: Guide the use of these offerings so that your will may be made manifest
and your creation restored through sharing these offerings. Amen.*

SUMM-IT UP:

SENDING HYMN: HYMN #349 v. 5 “*I Come with Joy*”

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BENEDICTION & CHARGE: *

L: We have been fed and nourished by the One who breathed into us the very breath of life.
So go forth from this time together living in the abundance of God’s treasure,
And spreading the love and peace of Christ in the world to the glory of God.
As we do that, may God bless and keep us.
May God’s face shine upon us and be gracious to us.
May God look upon us with compassion and love
and grant us the peace God alone can give. Amen.

POSTLUDE:

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Quinn Caldwell. (2013). *This Is How We Begin*. Cleveland, OH: United Church of Christ, Pilgrim Press.