

*Sunday Worship
A Service for Your Use at Home
St Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M Fluent, Pastor
October 4, 2020*

Because of the pandemic caused by the corona virus, our congregation, along with many others, has decided that we must forego gathered worship services at this time. Each Sunday until we gather again, we will provide worship materials that members and friends can use in our homes in the knowledge that we are not alone, but are celebrating these holy days with our friends and neighbors in the faith. As you use this worship service, I hope you will pause and remember the tune to a familiar hymn as you read the words, and pray as partners in the fellowship of Christ.

If you have access to a computer or cell phone, you may want to open the video recordings of the Communion Service provided by the pastor and the music for our hymn played by Della Leytze, on both our church website and the message sent to all who are on our email list. This week, in addition to the pastor's meditation on Communion, we are also including a video sermon provided by Global Ministries, the mission arm of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), with The Rev. Dr. Deenabandhu Manchaia, Area Executive for Southern Asia, preaching.

Today is the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, World Communion Sunday. On this day, we celebrate our partnerships with Christians throughout the world and affirm our unity by receiving the Sacrament that signifies for us the presence of Jesus Christ in the worldwide fellowship of faith.

As we begin our worship on this Sunday, let us join together in our opening hymn. (Those who receive our emails will receive a recording of the music played by Della Leytze in our sanctuary.) Our hymn is "Joyful, Joyful, we adore Thee."

***Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love.
Hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.***

***All thy works with joy surround thee, earth and heaven reflect thy ways.
Stars and angels sing around thee, center of unbroken praise.***

*Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in thee.*

*Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest.
Well-spring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our brother, all who live in love are thine;
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.*

*Mortals, join the happy chorus which the morning stars began ;
Love divine is reigning o'er us, joining all within its span.\
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.*

Call to Worship for World Communion Sunday (written by Rev. Jennie Gordon)

**Gathering God, joined as one family
we come to worship you today,
mindful of the breathing of the life that you have called in to being
across countries and climates;
all creatures and all creeds.**

**Jesus, teacher friend,
today you call us to your table and invite us to feed on your Spirit in our midst
so that we might then feed others.
Let our hunger for justice and our desire for peace never be exhausted
until all your children are safe and fed.**

**Life-giving Spirit,
let the words that reach our open ears
and your movement in our souls in this time together
bless, comfort and disturb us.
So that the work of your servants here may be directed along the right paths
for the sake of the world.
And all the people say: Amen.**

This morning our Scripture lesson is taken from the first Epistle of Paul to the Church at Corinth, chapter 11, verses 17-34. Paul is writing at a time when he is angry with church members who did not respect their fellow church members when they came together for the Holy Communion.

Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it.... When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, he took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things, I will give instructions when I come.

The Sermon:

(Note: For those who want to see and hear a video of the complete sermon you can find it on our church website or open the message that you will receive if you have given us your email address.)

The Apostle Paul was angry when he wrote his letter to the Corinthian Church. This was not unusual for Paul, who often lost his temper in print. It may have partly been due to a feeling we all can appreciate if we have ever gone away from a place where we've done work we were proud of and later heard about things that had fallen apart. It's a sad part of our sinful nature, I think, that we want to control things we have left behind. Usually it's better not to beat up on ourselves or on anyone else for our own disappointment over what

was not as well tied up as we thought it was. But in Paul's defense, it is true that some of the very best and most memorable and helpful sayings in the letters he wrote were written in anger and disappointment. I don't know if his letters helped the people he wrote them to, but they've now proven their value to a multitude of generations.

The issue at hand in our lesson for today is that people who came for the weekly banquet that was Christian worship and Communion in those days were not respecting the sacredness of the occasion by observing the hospitality of the common table. Those who were most powerful, perhaps because of wealth or because of social prestige, were pushing ahead to receive the most and the best of the food and drink, so that some were left with little or nothing at all, and went home hungry.

Can you feel Paul's exasperation? Can you imagine his anger? Love requires anger sometimes, when grave injustices are done; especially so, when the injustices are done by those professing the faith of Christ. Speaking personally, nothing can aggravate me quite so much as the sinfulness of Christians; and then I realize that the sinfulness may also live in me.

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the context in which the Lord's Supper is observed, recalling the experience of Jesus with the disciples in the upper room, the sober reality of his betrayal that evening, and how he made the bread and wine of the dinner into symbols of his own life poured out for the life of the world. He then tells them that their unworthy abuse of the supper they have come to share will cause them to be blinded to the presence of Christ in the meal, and cause them to eat and drink judgment to themselves instead of being able to enjoy the experience of being genuine members of a community of salvation. In some Christian traditions, this warning is taken to mean that people who do not believe the bread and wine of the Communion become the body and blood of Jesus (who do not discern Christ in the elements themselves) should refrain from partaking in the meal; but that is not our tradition. Within our fellowship, we understand Paul's words to mean that, when we do not see Christ in one another, and care for one another as for Christ, we lose the gift of Christ's presence in our midst. The rule of Communion is that we only eat when everybody can eat. If someone does not have food, we are expected to share. That's the meaning of "discerning the Lord's body," because every person is a member of the Body of Christ. All of us are individual in our character and our circumstances, but all of us are one and interdependent in the fellowship of Christ. So if one person is left out, the whole body suffers and the Body of Christ is not discerned.

The symbolic meaning of Communion is the radical message that everyone is invited and all are welcome; and this is a sign of how we are called to live in all the aspects of

our lives. In the Communion meal, we do not fence the table, to keep some people out. No one is excluded for any reason, not even lack of faith or sinfulness. Even Judas was accepted at the table. But what we do in church is only a sign that tells us how we are called to behave when we leave the sanctuary and return to the world. That's where it really counts, and that's where we are most likely to aggravate God.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

(During our time of social distancing, it has been our custom to invite everyone who participates in worship either with the printed liturgy at home or with the recorded version to find some item of food and some item of drink to use as the elements of the communion meal. These need not be bread and wine or grape juice. In the printed and recorded liturgy, we will bless the elements, and as you receive them at home, you may be assured that we are all in communion together.)

We remember the words of Jesus, on the evening of his betrayal. This is my body, given for you. This is the blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Take and eat, take and drink, in remembrance of me. As we celebrate this meal on World Communion Sunday, we will be offering prayers that were written in Christian churches of many nations.

From the church in Guatemala, we offer these words to God:

You emptied yourself completely, keeping nothing for yourself.

Now, naked and utterly stripped, you gave yourself to us as food that sustains us, and as drink that consoles us.

You are light and truth.

You are the way and the hope.

You are love. Grow in us.

Our Words of Institution are from the church in South Africa.

The ears of wheat are broken and scattered on the hillside to grow.

Gathered, they are broken again and scattered throughout the city to make bread.

The bread is scattered to each home and broken to make nourishment.

Broken and scattered, broken and scattered,

and some becomes Christ's body broken for us

as we are the people of God scattered through the city

and, perhaps, broken to give nourishment to others.

We receive this bread, broken, scattered and made whole.

(All receive the bread/food.)

We drink this cup, thirsty, longing, willing to be poured.

(All receive the drink.)

Let us join in our Communion Prayer of Thanksgiving that comes from Mexico:

We give you thanks, O Lord, for all food that has arrived at our table from your generosity. Bless the people who have made it possible, from the cultivation of the earth until it arrived to us. Give bread to those who are hungry, and to those who have bread give us hunger for you. Amen.

Let us pray in the words of our Lord Jesus:

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Benediction

**May the God of life be your guide on the road every day.
As a people, be more ready to respond to another's need.
Here we are so finely fashioned, understanding, here to serve,
Never narrow in compassion, empathy without reserve.**

(Prayers and portions of the Communion liturgy are from Maren Tirabassi, who gathered them for use on World Communion Sunday on the website of the Uniting Church of Canada.)

- - - - -

The Neighbors In Need offering is being accepted now. If you wish to contribute, send your donation to church with your regular offering.
Thank you!v