



GOD HEARS US

LIGHTING THE ALTAR CANDLES

MUSIC TO PREPARE US FOR WORSHIP Sue Koeppel, Musician

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Spaghetti Supper THANK YOU! Follow-up meeting is Monday May 9th at 6 pm.

*Coffee Fellowship returns downstairs after worship today. There'll be short Trustees meeting after worship in the conference room, so grab your better than average donut and we'll discuss refinishing the church's front doors.

*Want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who donated to the Native American Awareness Sunday Special offering. To date, over \$600 was given in support of our Native American siblings. TO GOD BE THE GLORY.

*Today we return to coming forward to receive Holy Communion like we used to before Covid. But, if you prefer to remain in your seat, Communion elements are available in pre-packaged form for you. The packages are at each exit.

WELCOME

Before you think I've lost my mind YES the bulletin is correct. TOGETHER is today's worship theme. Especially today, May 1st our United Methodist denomination officially splits. A group of United Methodists are splitting from the denomination to form a new more conservative denomination called the Global Methodist Church, and still or especially this day, we're talking about our lives TOGETHER...Together even though I'm retiring July 1st, TOGETHER! Together

even when we've been forced to be apart for so long. **TOGETHER** even though there so much that divides us. The church is all about people coming **TOGETHER** in Christ. Together even though sometimes it feels easier and way less stressful to live apart! **TOGETHER!** What a counterculture idea! **TOGETHER!!** Today's worship invites us to consider how a spiritual community comes together to be accountable and supportive of each other. So, would you stand as you are able and let's worship **TOGETHER**.

†**SHARING OUR GATHERING WORDS**

We often think that God is 'out there' somewhere, distant and uncaring.

But God hears our hearts, God sees our struggles, God walks with us as we try to be faithful disciples.

Let us come to the One who is as close as the very breath we take in this moment. **God hears our hearts, God sees our struggles, God walks with us as we try to be faithful disciples.**

OPENING SONG "My Faith Looks Up to Thee" #452

PRAYER INTRO In moments of crisis and pain, in moments of joy and celebration, no matter the time, emotion or circumstances, we come together to pray. Prayer's how we know God hears our sad cries, our silent suffering, our jubilant celebrating. God's people pray as a part of worship because together, not only does God hear us; God guides us in our praying and so we come to God to pray...

PASTORAL PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER Great and Gracious God, the image in which you shape us, mysteriously, incredibly, a reflection of your own Being, is best seen in the diversity of our humanity; in the kaleidoscopes of our shared life, our interconnectedness, our being with each other. We seek you, O God, we long for you. Thankfully you are not far off, not hidden; even though we forget how you are most easily found when we find you together, when we're humble enough to look even into the faces of those we find most strange and unfamiliar. So, no, it's not the big things that trip us up. It's usually the small things, our little concessions to bad attitudes, our tiny twisting of truth to make us look better, the minute of selfishness, the hidden disregard for others, but thankfully no flaw of ours is too small for your grace, for your Spirit's power to work in changing us. Thank you, Jesus. In your community, it's not only big things that matter, Jesus. You so often remind us of the small, the ordinary, that in your Spirit's power become extraordinary, leaving life and joy and healing in their wake. And, so we praise you

5/1/2022

for extraordinary ordinariness, for challenging and supporting one another, for taking responsibility for our relationships and lives, for work well done, and attitudes that make it a joy, for sharing peace and love and kindness with friends and strangers. We praise you for your love and peace that forms us as a community that in simple ordinary ways offers extraordinary grace to all, like Jesus who joins our hearts, hands and voices in prayer to you, O God praying.... 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. AMEN

PRAYING IN SONG “In the Garden”

#314

INVITATION TO GIVE Each gift given joins with every other gift and together, God uses our gifts to help us live in ways that bring God’s kingdom love to earth in Ottawa as it is in heaven. Together it’s an amazing opportunity God gives us to give to support the mission and ministry of Ottawa First United Methodist Church. If you’re worshipping in person, there are offering receptacles at each exit to receive your gift. And, if you’re worshipping with us online, you’re invited to send your gift to the church or use our website’s secure Paypal giving option. But now we need to pray to thank God for our ability to give difference making gifts. Let’s pray.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Holy God, when you gather us together, you work wonders beyond our imagination. Thank you for all the faithful people you’ve inspired in the history of the church. You’ve sent into our lives kind, generous Christians who have encouraged us in beautiful ways. Help us grow as your disciples led by your loving Spirit. May we become more devoted to good works and acts of charity, so that others will be blessed by your great love. We pray, and always in Jesus’ name.

Amen

TODAY’S SCRIPTURE READINGS

Lori Kline, Liturgist

Psalm 77: 1-9 (NIV)

I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands, and I would not be comforted. I remembered you, God, and I groaned; I meditated, and my spirit grew faint. You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak. I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; I remembered my songs in the night. My

5/1/2022

it's left pastors asking; "how do we retain people who have a view of the Gospel that does not include worship in a church?" I'd ask are we even reaching them to retain them? Another pastor said, "I think we're going to have to change." That pastor suggested more small faith-sharing experiences, and more investment in time and resources to empower people to share faith in new ways. I have to tell you, during the worst of the pandemic, a group of us met online, on Zoom. We called our group, Zoomchata. If you talked to any of the Zoomies, you'll hear how we endured the pandemic together. We processed that time together. Together but apart we supported one another. What a lifeline Zoomchata was during that very hard time. The article suggests investing in resources, (like Zoomchata) to empower people to share faith. But, I'll be honest, we're not all together in our thinking about who Jesus really is and how we do church. And, having the resources to do something new is difficult. Maintaining our building consumes the bulk of our budget. Leaves nothing to fund any new ministry, ironically in a mostly empty building. But, online, digital options for doing church continue to grow...In fact, there's a new social network called FaithMeet. FaithMeet was developed by a Christian tech expert from India. FaithMeet's designed to be a one-stop destination for digital worship. The idea is: people won't have to use secular digital platforms like Facebook or YouTube to connect to a church. Do not hear me suggest Ottawa First gets signed up, but there are churches who are signing up. FaithMeet provides quick responses for prayer requests. FaithMeet collects tithes and offerings for a church and their ministries. FaithMeet gives access to other church's videos and songs. Since February, 300 people from all over the world have registered for FaithMeet. Of course, there's a monthly fee to use the service. But, does it all make you wonder where church is going? How will we come together if we're both in-person and online. Are you ready to cry out to God in frustration and desperation? Is TOGETHER even possible? God designed us to need meaningful connections. Some of us love the online worship option; but some of us struggle with the whole idea of online church. And, another group of us can't even access online anything. TOGETHER sure seems challenging these days. But, then there are other pastors in the article that say they still hold out hope for the traditional way of doing church, Sunday worship inside the church! Those are the folks who feel like the online option should be eliminated. (Just an aside, we love our online viewers. We are so very grateful for each and everyone of you). Covid and the events of 2020 EXPOSED all these issues. We can't NOT see how church isn't what it used to be. But then,

5/1/2022

church experts will tell you the church has been declining since the 1970's. Another hard to hear issue: Christians are divided along the same polarized, political lines conservative and liberal, the cause of our denomination's split. And, if we're continuing to be open, honest about church; we simply must acknowledge the generational differences in the ways we socialize. Basically, most 60 plus year old's and older like to gather in person in clubs and organizations like church, the Lions, the Rotary and the Moose to socialize and serve the community. Those in their 50's are the group caught in the transition from in person gathering to digital connections, social media, instant messaging and texting. If you're 30 or younger, you most likely get together exclusively digitally and online. HOW DO WE COME TOGETHER in all of these difficulties and differences? How? BE like today's Psalmist! Cry out to God for help. Admit we're in distress. Seek the Lord. Put our hearts to meditate and our spirits ask: "Will the Lord reject us forever? Will God never show God's favor again? Has God's unfailing love vanished forever? Has God's promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Is God angry and withholding his compassion? The picture today's Psalmist draws with his words depicts utter desperation. Surely God won't desert us? God's unfailing love won't vanish forever? God's promises never fail, right? Today's Psalmists cycles through a wide, uncontrollable range of emotions, but notice he doesn't try to hide his emotions from God. He's real and reverent, honest yet humble. He asks God the hard questions. Can we? Can we come together, cry out to God for help and ask God the hard questions? I remember when I came to Ottawa First. We were a church in turmoil. We worshipped as two very separate congregations, 8 and 10 o'clock. Coming together looked to be a worship war. 23 people came to the meeting where the Ad Council would decide to either keep two services or merge to one service. We literally came together and cried out to God. God led us to come together in one worship service at 9 am. The vote was unanimous. It's like today's Exodus scripture when life looked pretty dark, dismal and desperate for God's people, Israel. When this scripture was happening, the Israelites had been enslaved in Egypt almost 400 years. There's no biblical record of any prophet speaking to the people during this time. God seemed silent. Stories of their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were told from parents to children but that all must have seemed so far away. Think of your own ancestors. 400 years ago – in the year 1622. How much do you know about them? So here are the Israelites: slaves to a king who hates them, to a king who's trying to wipe them out by killing all their baby boys. Still,

5/1/2022

they come together in the desperation. Together, they cry out to God. They cry out to God because through the generations they'd been taught that's what you. But: Is God there? Is God aware of what's going on with God's people? Does God even care? Does God remember? Especially since that was then and this is now. But, in times of trouble, their questions are our questions. Their cries are our cries. And, how does today's Exodus scripture tell us God answers their question? God hears their groaning. God remembers God's covenant with their forefathers. God sees the people. God knows. Two short verses answer our every doubting question. In short, God hears! God remembers! God sees! And, God knows! God's never put off by that kind of open, honest, unvarnished truth. In fact, the Bible promises "the LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." We often complain and lament to one another, how times have changed, how we're concerned for our future...but have we as God's people Ottawa First come together to cry out to God? From my perspective as your Pastor, we were working our way there and then Covid happened. Now, in Covid's aftermath I wonder? Can we come together to face reality? Can we come together to cry out to God in real and reverent, honest yet humble ways? My friends, our God Hears! Every word we cry, every unspoken thought, God hears. Our God Remembers! All God's promises are realized in Christ Jesus. God is faithful to God's promise to work all things together for the good of those who love God. Our God Sees! What's behind us. What's ahead of us, all the hardship, all the threats, all the dangers. Our God Knows! God knows you: God knows this church. God knows our sins, our failures, our strengths and our weaknesses; God even knows our *enemies*, and the trials they'll put in our path. Most of all, God knows God's *plans* for you and for this church. God already knows the path by which God will lead us. God will work all these trials together for our good and His glory. My friends, God has called Pastor Seamus to lead you forward. So persevere! Hold on and come together. I want to call us back to another very hard time. Remember the February 2017 tornado? For many in Ottawa and Naplate it was a dark and desperate time. But the youth group and their parents came together the Saturday after the tornado to do tornado clean-up. We went to parishioners yards first, the Houk's and the McCallisters. When I trace our steps that day, all I can say is: God's Holy Spirit was leading us; to an elderly man's yard and then to a young family's house on Adams street. I'll never forget it, the dad was standing out in his yard with this dazed and glazed look on his face. He seemed completely overwhelmed. A very large tree had fallen in their back yard, part of it on their house. The yard was a disaster but here we come with God power to clean

5/1/2022

it all up and that's exactly what we did. When we finished we handed them a \$100 Handy Foods gift card. Did that dad cry out to God in his desperation? And, did God send us as an answer to his cries? Felt like it. And, all of us who were there that day, will never forget it...because we came together to be God's love on earth in Ottawa. So, as we continue in this grace period, let's come together to help each other fulfill our membership vows to offer the church our prayers, presence, gifts service and witness. Let's keep coming together and praying for each other and the church's future. Let's come together to love and serve our community, TOGETHER, that's with God and each other! Together, like in close proximity. Together in close association. Together at the same time. Together not apart, connected not broken online or in person! Together mutually, unanimously, unitedly, cooperatively, sharing life together, working to bring God's' kingdom love to earth. Together and moving at the pace of God's amazing GRACE. You see, the kind of togetherness I'm talking about transcends time and space because what God joins together is together forever!

AMEN

God joins us together and we commune with all the saints in glory at the table of Holy Communion.

HOLY COMMUNION

Let us lift up our hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God, for you provide for the needs of your people with a generosity beyond our comprehension. In the first of your mighty wonders you created the earth and filled it with good things. When you led your people out of slavery, you heard their cries in the desert and gave them food from heaven so that they might eat and give thanks to you. So too, you feed us through your child, Jesus, the bread of heaven, who came to nourish us and strengthen us in the faith.

Though he was killed, he raised to life, and now gives himself with scandalous extravagance to all who respond to his call, the early comers and late comers alike. You are grace at all times and in every place. Therefore, with our hearts lifted high, we offer you thanks and praise at all times and in every place and especially now...

5/1/2022

We give you thanks for the bread of heaven which you give with scandalous extravagance to all who respond to your loving grace... through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. On the night in which he gave himself up for us, Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, we remember...and we offer ourselves ...

Christ has died, Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

By God's Spirit go forth in the strength of God's grace made tangible in the receiving of this Holy Meal. And may the power and presence of God go with you. May the Call of Christ lead you into fruitful kingdom labors of love. And may God's Most Holy Spirit fill you with the joy of grace.

**We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen**

RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

PRAYER FOLLOWING THE RECEIVING

†**CLOSING SONG** "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms"

#133

†**BENEDICTION & SENDING FORTH**

God hears us!

God remembers us! God sees us!

God knows us and loves us!

So, go in the **AMAZING GRACE** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, let's just keep finding ways to gather **TOGETHER** to do God's kingdom work.

MUSIC AFTER WORSHIP

Sue Koeppel, Musician