

UMCA ORDER OF WORSHIP

Sunday, June 27, 2021

Staying the Course

Stay Generous

PRELUDE

Diane (Title TBD)

WELCOME

Laura

Good Morning, welcome to worship!

Introduce self. Greet all who are participating in worship in person or via live stream.

Summer VBS Sunday school - we will share Communion together with the kids in the room and then dismiss them to spend time with Joan exploring God's love in the deep blue sea!

If you did not receive your communion elements on your way into the sanctuary, please wave at the ushers and they will bring them to you.

Offering: General Fund and Conference Love Offering (baskets at rear of sanctuary or give online).

CALL TO WORSHIP

Laura

Come, and praise God!

In the company of God's people,

let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Great are the works of God,

full of glory and majesty.

Our God is gracious and compassionate;

our God is merciful and forgiving

our God is faithful and trustworthy,

our God is just and good.

So come, let's worship God together.

God's praise will last forever!

Let us pray.

OPENING PRAYER

Laura

God, you are so good! We come before you in worship and praise, and we are a thankful people. You have raised us up, even in our struggles. You have loved us,

even when we have turned away. You have called us to you and you provide all that we need. Stir us to gratitude, move us to generosity, and help us to rejoice every day in the joy of giving! For you so loved the world that you gave. May we also love and give. Amen.

COMMUNION HYMN

*Be Present at Our Table, Lord (UMH 621, once)
(words slightly different from the Hymnal)*

Be present at our table, Lord; be here and everywhere adored
These mercies bless and grant that we may feast in fellowship with thee

HOLY COMMUNION

Laura

We open our weekly worship here, at the table, together as one body in Christ. Jesus invites us all to this table - every one. Here, God's grace is freely shared. Come, share a meal together. Come, you who love Jesus, who are learning to love Jesus, who want to love Jesus. Come, confess and discover grace. Come, be at peace with God, with others, and within yourself.

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts to the Lord

We lift up our hearts with thanks and praise!

We are yours, all yours, Holy God, all our lives, all our thanks, all our praise,
we give it all to you, with all our bodies, and minds, and voices.
We are your people, whom you have called covenant with you,
a covenant we have continually broken, and you have continuously sustained.
How can we but praise you, joining our voices with the song of angels and saints,

Jesus Christ who comes in our God's name, you are worthy!

Lamb of God who died and rose again, you are worthy!

Hosanna now we sing! Hosanna now we sing!

You are holy, O God! You are worthy, O Christ!

Worthy when you preached the good news that God's kingdom has drawn near

and as you have gathered disciples, then and now, to learn and show the world what life in God's reign means:

healing for the sick, new life for the dead,
cleansing for the lepers, freedom for the possessed,
new birth, new hope, new creation breaking in for all.

Worthy too, the night we betrayed you, when you took the bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to your disciples. Worthy when you told them, "This is my body broken for you. Remember me."

We remember.

Worthy when you took the cup, praised God and shared it, and worthy when you said, "This is the cup of salvation. Drink from it and remember me."

We remember.

We remember, and we praise you with our lives and these gifts of bread and cup, proclaiming with one voice the mystery of faith:

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

Come upon us, Holy Spirit and upon these gifts. Make them Christ for us. Make us one in Christ as we pray for the church and the world:

That we may proclaim the gospel boldly, **Hear us, O God.**

That we may offer your healing for all who are sick, or torn, or weary, **Hear us, O God.**

That our beloved dead may be raised, and death's power vanquished, **Hear us, God.**

That all who are possessed, oppressed, and distressed may be set free, **Hear us, O God.**

Come and fill this feast, Holy Spirit, this day, and every day until that day when we eat together in your kingdom and our rejoicing shall know no end. All blessing, honor, glory and power be yours, Holy God, now and forever. **Amen!**

We eat together in grace and love. We drink together in mercy and salvation.

Short musical interlude (Diane)

PRAYER FOLLOWING COMMUNION (Laura)

Lord, you renew us at your table with the bread of life. May this meal and the grace we receive from you strengthen us in love. Send us to serve you as we serve others in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now that we have shared this holy meal together, we invite the children to join Joan to go across the hall to the Community Room for Summer Sunday School! The group will move outside to play at the end, parents you can pick up your kids on the lawn after worship.

HYMN

Take My Life and Let It Be

399 vs 1-3

Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments
and my days;
let them flow
in ceaseless praise.

Take my silver
and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect, and use
every power as
thou shalt choose.

Take my hands,
and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet,
and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.

3. Take my will,
and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart,
it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

2. Take my voice,
and let me sing
always, only, for my King.
Take my lips,
and let them be
filled with messages from thee

Take my love,
my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its
treasure-store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

FIRST READING

Philippians 2:6-11 (CEB) -Marna

Though he was in the form of God,
he did not consider being equal with God something to exploit.
But he emptied himself
by taking the form of a slave
and by becoming like human beings.
When he found himself in the form of a human,
he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.
Therefore, God highly honored him
and gave him a name above all names,
so that at the name of Jesus everyone
in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow

and every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

SPECIAL MUSIC

How Can I Keep from Singing

Tomlin, Redman, Cash, arr. Fettke

EMI Publishing 2006

Mixed Ensemble: Jan Warren, Dale Brown,
Nancy Jo Mattson, and Bruce Falink

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 8:7-15 (CEB) - Marna

Be the best in this work of grace in the same way that you are the best in everything, such as faith, speech, knowledge, total commitment, and the love we inspired in you. I'm not giving an order, but by mentioning the commitment of others, I'm trying to prove the authenticity of your love also. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although he was rich, he became poor for your sakes, so that you could become rich through his poverty.

I'm giving you my opinion about this. It's to your advantage to do this, since you not only started to do it last year but you wanted to do it too. Now finish the job as well so that you finish it with as much enthusiasm as you started, given what you can afford. A gift is appreciated because of what a person can afford, not because of what that person can't afford, if it's apparent that it's done willingly. It isn't that we want others to have financial ease and you financial difficulties, but it's a matter of equality. At the present moment, your surplus can fill their deficit so that in the future their surplus can fill your deficit. In this way there is equality. As it is written, The one who gathered more didn't have too much, and the one who gathered less didn't have too little.

HYMN

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing #400

Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of thy redeeming love.

Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I'm come;

and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;

here's my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.

SERMON

Stay Generous (Laura)

A couple months ago my husband, Andrew and I decided that we wanted to start refinishing furniture. We have enough going on already, why not learn a new hobby? We received two dressers for free and they needed to be refinished, but I did not feel like we were ready to take on the dressers just yet. So we settled on redoing two end tables that had seen better days. But where do we start, what do you need to refinish an end table? What are the steps? So we both started researching the different techniques-sanding versus stripping or a combination of the two, what is the best sandpaper, what is the best: stains or wood paints? We watched several YouTube videos, and consulted some websites. After doing our research we went to our local Lowes to buy the supplies. We got home with two bags of supplies, and we disassembled the end table and we were ready to go!

I would like to say we have two beautiful end tables, but alas the end tables sit in our garage disassembled no closer to reaching its potential of a charming piece of living room furniture. We started strong, but stalled out in the middle of the project. We were so enthusiastic about the project. But the initial enthusiasm we had was not enough to carry us to the finish line.

Something similar is happening with the church in Corinth in today's reading. This is Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth, and in his first letter he shared with them that the church in Jerusalem was struggling, and instructed them to set aside money each week when they gathered so that the money could be sent to Jerusalem. And in the beginning the church in

Corinth did just that. They took up an offering for Jerusalem each week, and set aside the money so it could be brought to Jerusalem. They started strong, they took Paul's first letter to heart and followed through. And it does not say what happened in between Paul's first and second letter, but the collection of money slowed down or stopped completely.

The Corinthians could have lost interest, maybe a more urgent matter came up in the church, or at the time that Paul wrote his second letter there was some tension between Paul and the church in Corinth. Regardless of the reasons, they had started strong and had lost momentum half way through.

The work of being the church is a marathon, not a sprint. It is hard work over a long, LONG time. Positive thinking or enthusiasm will not see the church to the finish line. Starting strong is great, but finishing to the end is better.

Paul also reminds them of the church in Macedonia. Despite their own severe poverty and challenges they were extremely generous with what little extra resources they had. And they were enthusiastic about their efforts and were overjoyed that they could be part of this ministry of sharing their resources with the Christians in Jerusalem. By using the example of the Macadonian church, Paul circumvents a possible excuse that the Corinthians may have-that they are not extremely wealthy so they can only give so much. But a church with less resources is still faithful to Paul's call to share out of the abundance of their resources. And the Macadonians took it a step further, they gave beyond their surplus of money.

Paul is pointing to the example of the church in Macedonia, because they were embodying what Paul was trying to communicate to his readers in Corinth-that generosity is a spiritual practice. All the churches that Paul

was leading were invited to give to a collection that would benefit the churches or the groups that needed it the most. It was not a quid pro quo arrangement-where you put in so much and expect to get that amount back. Instead each person in the churches were invited to be generous because it meant that they were caring for their neighbors with no guarantee or promise that they would ever receive anything in return.

Paul is asking for folks to give without expecting anything in return. The generosity that Paul is asking for comes from the work of grace in that church and its individuals. Paul makes no mention of the promise of prosperity if they give. Instead he points to the example of Jesus. He refers to the passage from Philippians that Marna read to us this morning. Jesus became poor and self emptied himself for our benefit so that all of humanity can be rich in the transforming grace that comes through Jesus. Paul reminds the Corinthian church that they have already received the saving grace of Jesus, it is given as a gift and is not earned. However, Paul is hoping that the church in Corinth will show evidence of their transformation through Jesus by acting generously even though there is no reward. Paul is trying to get them to see beyond their own community to view the other Christian churches as part of the greater whole. They all succeed together by sharing their resources.

Time and time again it is evident that the ways of the world are not the way of Christ. How we use our resources have spiritual implications. How we spend our money is connected to our faith and how we become disciples of Christ. The poor or under-resourced are not in our midst so we can feel better about ourselves, instead we give out of our abundance so that we can grow in our faith. Generosity is a habit, an exercise over a

lifetime. Generosity is not something you do a lot of for a time and then rest on your good deeds, but continue to do over a lifetime.

After making it through 2020, it seems like everything feels so much more difficult. Any momentum that was building in our personal, and professional lives dissipated as the pandemic wore on. We have collectively realized how life can shift over the course of a weekend, and it disrupted our lives in a profound way. And I don't know about you being generous in general feels extra hard right now. In high times of stress and loss, we naturally gravitate towards our world shrinking. The focus shifts on what you, the individual needs, and your immediate family. In stress it is hard to think beyond the tiny world we create for ourselves.

The challenge of today's Scripture reading is that Paul makes no exceptions for being generous. If the church in Macedonia can be generous, well guess what? You can too! I will be the first to admit that this is easier said than done. Being a follower of God means that you are called to look beyond your own family to the needs of your community, and take action. Not because you are compelled to but because it is the natural result of the Holy Spirit's work in your life. You can't stand the test of time by relying on enthusiasm to keep you generous, it requires that you stay connected to a faith community to hold you accountable and encourage you as you grow in generosity.

When I was in college, I did an internship at a non-profit in Saint Paul called The Lift. The Lift was started by one of the pastors of the church I attended at the time. Its mission was to equip young leaders in Saint Paul-specifically young teens of color that historically have been under-resourced.

I was about a month into the internship and my car started to have problems. My car was old and the winter was not kind to it. It created a great deal of stress because I was not sure if it would start when I needed to drive into Saint Paul to work at the Lift. After a week of problems I took it into the mechanic, and the estimate for the repair was over \$1000. That was a lot of money to spend on a repair for a college student. I paid the bill to get it repaired, and drove home to vent to my roommates. I vented that I would need to take a break from our weekly trips to Applebees for half priced appetizers because my bank account had taken a hit.

The next time I went to my internship it was on a Wednesday night when the Lift offered a worship service for the teens, and their families. Previous weeks I would drop a twenty dollar bill in the offering plate to support the work of the Lift, but that night? No way! I quickly passed the offering plate on by. Little did I know that I was about to be humbled.

One of the moms of the teens got up towards the end of the service to share her testimony. I learned that she had been part of this community for several years and her kids were regular participants in the programs. She talked about how hard it was to be both a mom and work a full time job. Her face changed and she excitedly said that she was able to pay all her bills this month. She explained that most months she does not make enough to pay all her bills, but this month was different. She said. "This month I had just enough to pay all my bills, almost down to the cent. But God is faithful and I am praising God that I have enough this month." And then she excitedly pulled something out of her pocket, she opened her hand and revealed a twenty dollar bill. She walked over to the offering plate and said "I almost forgot to put my offering in this week."

In that moment it felt like the Holy Spirit was smacking me upside the head. Here I was groaning about having a large car repair bill and making excuses for my lack of generosity, and then this mom came along to testify to how God has provided for her, and she still gave sacrificially to support her community even when she had so little. This woman embodied generosity so fully in that moment, that I could not help but be moved by her testimony to God's work in her life.

The depths of this church's generosity testifies to how we are collectively being transformed by God's work in our lives. It has been my experience that when Pastor Rachael or I share a need, people generously give to meet that need. In the last year this congregation has responded quickly when Minneapolis and Brooklyn Center residents were in need of basic supplies. Pastor Rachael and I were able to fill a whole car full of diapers and wipes to bring to Brooklyn Center a couple of months ago. Through the Good Samaritan Fund when a person in our community has an immediate need we are able to respond that day.

In the last year, this fund has helped a grandmother that is caring for her two grandchildren full time because their mother is unable to parent them at this time. We have been able to meet the needs of a young mother that is working hard to pay all the bills, but having a baby is really expensive. I have received emotional calls after someone received money for gas to put in their van and gift cards to purchase grocery items. This person shared how their child was just laid off that day and is worried about whether they can provide Christmas presents for their two kids this year. Through all your generosity this past December by donating Christmas presents I was able to personally deliver a car full of gifts and gift cards so they can buy groceries for a Christmas dinner. I find myself becoming

emotional because these gifts communicate to these families that they are not alone in this world, and a congregation of people that they have never met are giving out of their abundance. Talk about providing hope to our community. I am proud of the work we have done so far, and there is still more to be done.

Our surrounding community has been through a lot in the past year, and hope feels like it is in short supply. We can't lose our motivation to be generous even when it is hard. There is more to be done, and I believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in all our lives. You all have been faithful to your commitment to provide hope to our community even if there is uncertainty about the future. My prayer is that we dream big dreams for what this church is capable of. Share it with each other, dare to believe that God uses what we have to offer big and small. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Look to the Day

John Rutter; Collegium Music Publications 2008
Mixed Ensemble

PASTORAL PRAYER

Stephen Perry

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Stephen Perry

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.

CLOSING HYMN (stand up)

Sent Forth by God's Blessing (UMH 664, vs 1)

Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing
The people of God from this dwelling take leave
The service is ended, O now be extended
The fruits of our worship in all who believe
The seed of the teaching, receptive souls reaching
Shall blossom in action for God and for all

God's grace did invite us and love shall unite us
To work for God's kingdom and answer the call

BENEDICTION

Laura

Go out from this place to be people of generosity in a world crying out for hope and compassion. Let your prayers be that God equips you to give out of your abundance that comes from the love and grace that God has shown you. May we all be people that stay generous so that our neighborhoods, cities, and world will be transformed.

POSTLUDE

Diane