

Home Worship June 28, 2020

Gathering Music

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

<https://youtu.be/MmkzSjs9eAw>

Prayer for Beginners

God of surprise and wonder,
you plot and plan new directions for us..
You bring to birth new life and new hope.
You call us out to swim unknown waters.
But we are not alone.
Your Spirit broods over the deep.
Your Light shows us where we can safely sail.
We are on a new journey with you, God of surprise.
Who knows where it may lead??
We step out, we set sail, trusting that you will bear us on the breath of dawn.
Amen

Song

“Turn, Turn, Turn” based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-10 Pete Seeger, performed by the Byrds

https://youtu.be/NsliGq_Nv0o

Readings

Isaiah 43:19-23

I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
The wild animals will honour me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

Matthew 13:31-33 Two Little Parables

Jesus put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³²it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’

He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.’

A Poem

Praying

by Mary Oliver [from Thirst, Boston 2006]

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch
a few words together, and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

Reflection by Jane

So what do I say to you on this Sunday of all Sundays-

Unlike every Sunday I've ever known?

I've had many last services before- but those times I was actually leaving and not coming back and likely never to see some folk again.

This one , I'll eventually move out of my church office, but otherwise I'm still around, and I may be back, and we are very likely to see each other again.

led and still be pressed into service from time to time.

So it's not a goodbye as I've done them before - But it is a goodbye to my years of full-time work including 26 years of full-time pastoral ministry And even if I'm back for a little while, I'll be doing fewer things. And along with goodbye, there is hello- hello to retirement, hello, I hope, to government pension and church pension, hello to - well, who knows what it's hello to?

Goodbye and hello - that's part of life as the fatalist writer of Ecclesiastes saw it-

Recast more hopefully by Pete Seeger-

Opening a window for good times to come- world peace perhaps?

Or perhaps a time to slow down climate change- or a time to heal from racism-

Or a time to roll out a COVID vaccine.

And Isaiah takes it further- God is all about change- doing a new thing.

Hello to what we have never seen before and can't even imagine.

Goodbyes - over almost 10 years, we've had many a goodbye

Goodbye to friends who've moved away - at least 10 come to mind right away, plus of course all kinds of young ones who've flown the coop

Goodbye - more sadly- to friends who have died- some at a ripe old age, some sooner than we would wish- 24 church friends quickly come to mind, and I know I'm missing some.

Goodbyes in our leadership - as some have had to pull back because of other circumstances-

Goodbye to church musicians and administrators-

And it's been goodbye to other things too - goodbye to church the way it used to be, or we might hope that it could be again,

Goodbye to either Wesley or St James having their own full-time minister-

And - courageously - goodbye to several St James buildings, and goodbye to the former look of Wesley sanctuary

And with that hellos- hellos to Cooperative Ministry, to More Voices hymn books, to midweek contemplative worship, to Coffee houses, to house church, to eclectic readings not all from the Bible, to Open Door, to a playgroup, to a refugee family, to a renovated sanctuary, to a labyrinth, to drumming circles, to affirming ministry,

And yes, hellos to new friends who have come our way and found a home in one of our communities, some Sunday morning - I can think of well over 20 easily- and others midweek.

and are helping to shape new tomorrows-and with them new gifts and insights,

And among you - both communities- so much openness to new ways of visioning and being-

Of course, I've preached change and a new thing and new possibilities to you , but often you are the ones leading the way!

And amid all these goodbyes and hellos, I've discerned you are ready for another change-
For someone who has a bit more youthful energy than I have- I'm not saying they've got to be much more youthful
but a bit more energy would be great!
Who has a different set of gifts and skills, and who can walk the next steps with you into your next phase of being.
Speaking of walking, I want to walk off stage while I still can.
Not like the ancient priest in the first episode of the Vicar of Dibley - remember, it took a minute or too before
anyone noticed he was actually dead.

I didn't plan for the challenges of a restructured church , much less for pandemic season. I thought that 8 months
notice would be enough to get you your new minister!

But you know what they say about the best laid plans of mice and men and women! And the life of faith is all
about plans turned upside down and backwards- just read the Bible !

And while you live in a transitional and precarious time,
So too did Jesus' first friends- how would the realm of God ever come about , when they were so few and they
didn't have control over much of anything?

And so these parables of small things- mustard seeds - or any small seed you can imagine- that will grow and
grow and grow- Or, take yeast- if you can find any in this time when bread making has come back into fashion-
Only a tiny bit of yeast and the bread dough will rise and rise and rise.

It has been suggested- the mustard seed in this parable is a weed, and you know how stubborn weeds are- you
can't get rid of them. It has been suggested- the yeast here has got into bread that was meant to be unleavened,
it's not supposed to be there either- but once it's there, you can't stop it.

Some like to predict the church's demise- some warn that lots of churches won't survive the pandemic. I don't
know about other churches - but I think Wesley and St James can be stubborn as a weed that won't go away, and
you can be as unstoppable as yeast making the bread rise.

You've got this far by being stubborn, by being unstoppable-
By believing you are here for a reason, the world needs you, Charlotte County needs you
To be a voice of welcome, compassion , diversity, imagination, openness and more-
A doorway into thanks,
A place where all can speak, and listen, and be heard-
A place for the blossoming of beloved community, the birthing of God's realm,
And yes, a song for the Turning of the World.

Reflective Music

Let Us Sing This Song for The Turning of The World [sung by Sara Thomsen]

<https://youtu.be/empGqV8Usvk>

Offertory

**As we have received, so we give - so that our beloved community may continue amid this turning, and
the Great Turning needed for God's world. We give not only material gifts, but above all the gift of our
care, and our prayer, and our love. As we lean on each other and on you, we trust that your wondrous
ways will unfold in our living and being and becoming. May it be so!**

Prayer

Loving God, Infinite Wisdom, Amazing Grace, we have met you in this beloved community. Your strength and persistence has worked through us as we have faced many changes. We have taken inspiration from Jesus and his friends, sharing the adventure of beloved, life-changing community. We have taken inspiration from those faithful and courageous persons who in every time and place have lived through changes and dared to journey into new and unknown terrain. Today we give thanks for all that has inspired us, all that has encouraged us, all that has drawn us together, all that has guided us along unexpected paths. And so we shall continue to create sacred space and sacred time together, wherever we are, whoever is with us.

Even as Jesus departed from his circle of friends, new life emerged, Love born anew, Beloved Community sprung up in many lands. And for us too new life is born among us, again and again, in changing times of many kinds. We remember all our companions through endings, through wilderness wanderings, into new landscapes- those now departed into Mystery, all who remain, all who have joined us along the way. Open to new beginnings, travelling unknown ways, we trust in the mystery of your unfailing love and light.

And now we feel the breath of dawn, the wind that blows where she will, often in ways and directions we did not expect. Wherever we are, wherever we go, we taste and see that goodness which has no end. Even when our ways diverge and our time together is too short, may we trust that we are always together in that life and love which have no limits, held always in the warmth of God's compassion. **Blessing to you, our God of Love, through whom all generations shall call themselves blessed.**

and all our prayers we gather into the words we share with communities around the world and across the ages. Our Father [or Mother, or Creator]

We Sing [along]

Lean on Me performed by Playing for change

<https://youtu.be/LiouJsnYytI>

Announcements, Joys and Concerns

Worship will continue in both formats at least part way into August- July services to be offered by Rev. Ali Anningson. Your Boards will be discerning future directions for worship and your Search Committee will certainly let the Boards know when there is significant news to share.

A special welcome to three new members who have transferred into Wesley from other United Churches: Glen Harris, Joanne Raye and Sheila Washburn. [a returning member after a time away]. They transferred just when we were no longer meeting in person- so perhaps a more celebratory time will come.

Blessing [by Keri K. Wehlander]

Unfamiliar seas again- there's been a shift in the wind.

We wrap ourselves in chaos and possibility and attend to this new course.

We prefer being experts, and the skill that familiarity brings.

Yet something continually stirs and surprises us.

We are always Beginners

So let us go with curiosity and courage, with vision and vigour.

Let us journey beyond these opening doors.

Ready to learn and learn again.

Ready to embark and embark again.

Ready to trust and trust again in the one who has loved us in every beginning . Amen.

Going Forth

VU883 Shall Go Out With Joy And Be Led Forth In Peace
{Isaiah 55} Sung by Christwood singers

<https://youtu.be/xPHwmQN3dVM>