

GATHERING

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship from Matthew 11:28-30

Hear this invitation from Jesus:

“Are you tired?
Worn out?
Burned out on religion?

Come to me.
Get away with me and you’ll recover your life.
I’ll show you how to take a real rest.

Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.

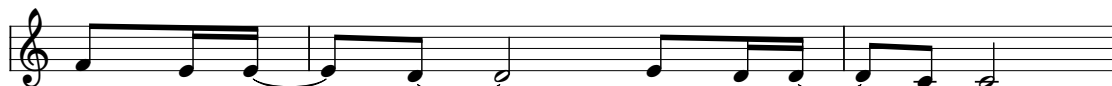
I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.
Keep company with me
and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Let us worship the One who invites us into God’s presence.

Gathering Song: Come to Me



You are weighed down; you are wor - ried.
I am gen - tle; I am hum - ble.



Child, I see you; child, I know you.
Let me teach you. let me show you.



Bring your bur - dens; bring your la - bor: Come to me.
Trade your bur - den; mine is ea - sy. Come to me.



Come to me, come to me, come to me if you are wea -



- ry. I will give you, I will give you my rest.

PRAISING

Prayer of Adoration

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

We gather this morning from all over your city;

we gather from the places you've called us to serve.

We come with hearts, minds, and hands that are full, Lord,

full of stories to tell: stories of praise and thanksgiving,

stories of sadness and confession. We carry these things before you, Lord, openly and honestly as an act of love for you and our neighbor.

May all of our offerings be a sacrifice of praise to you this day. Gather our stories into your story, gather our work into your work, bring our lives into your life. For you have called us here, Lord, you have carried us, and all these things, to you.

And so we gather, Lord, for worship,

not by our power, but by the power of your Spirit;

not in our name, but in the name of your Son.

May we, today, be a sacrifice of praise to you. Amen.

Come Thou Almighty King

Come Thou Almighty King, help us Thy name to sing; Help us to praise.

Father all glorious, o'er all victorious, come, and reign over us, Ancient of Days.

Come, Thou incarnate Word, merciful, mighty Lord, our prayer attend.

Come, and thy people bless, and give Thy Word success; Spirit of holiness, on us descend.

Come, holy Comforter, Thy sacred witness bear in this glad hour.

Thou who almighty art, now rule in every heart, and ne'er from us depart, Spirit of power.

To Thee, great One in Three, eternal praises be, hence evermore!

Thy sovereign majesty may we in glory see, and to eternity love and adore.

Felice de Giardini***

Put Not Your Hope in the Nation (Psalm 146)



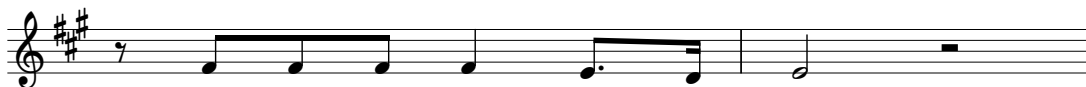
Put not your hope in the na-tion; put not your hope in a king.
He is the hope of the hun-gry; He is the Lord of the feast.



Trust in the on - ly one who o - pens eyes
Our Fa - ther's house al - ways o - pens wide



and sets the pris-oner free. He is the mak - er of heav-en;
to wel-come ref - u - gees. The fa-ther-less find a Fa-ther;



He formed the earth and the sea.
the wid - ow rests in His strength.



Our help will come from the Lord our God, our gra-cious king of peace.
The heart of God is for - ev - er home to all the poor and weak.



Praise the Lord! Praisethe Lord! Praisethe Lord, Omy soul!



Praise the Lord! Praisethe Lord! Praisethe Lord, Omy soul!

Wendell Kimbrough**

BELONGING

Kids on the Steps

Prayer of Confession

The act of confessing our sin is not simply a recitation of our faults and wrongs, but also an opportunity to receive God's mercy and share in that abundant grace. Confident of God's love for us, let us offer our prayers, first in silence.

Silence

Gracious God, source of all life, Lord of mercy and grace, hear our prayer.

We come before you in need of healing:

The healing of our bodies and souls,

The healing of our relationships,

The healing of our pride and fear and apathy.

We know that with you, nothing is impossible, not even our healing,

Not even the restoration of the whole world.

We pray that you will heal us, that you will heal our world,

So that we will be freed to serve and love and dream and be, as Christ calls us. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

One: Friends, hear this Good News and see the grace of God:

You are forgiven. You are free to go and live in the light of love.

All: Thanks be to God!

STEWARDING

Invitation to Offering

Musical Offering: Your Peace Will Make Us One

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

You are speaking truth to power, You are laying down our swords.

Replanting every vineyard til a brand new wine is poured.

Your peace will make us one.

I've seen You in our home fires burning with a quiet light.

You are mothering and feeding in the wee hours of the night.

Your gentle love is patient, You will never fade or tire.

Your peace will make us one.

Glory, glory, hallelujah!

Your peace will make us one!

In the beauty of the lilies, You were born across the sea

With a glory in Your spirit that is still transfiguring.

Dismantling our empires til each one of us is free.

Your peace will make us one.

Audrey Assad**

Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

FORMING

Sermon: Jeremiah 29:7, 11 and John 17:20-23

Dan Cravy

Pursuing A House United: Our House is On Fire

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a brilliant, faithful, young German pastor enjoying his service to two German-speaking churches across the English Channel in London. Twelve years later he would die a martyr for his resistance to the Nazis. Karl Barth was an influential theologian at work in Bonn to oppose the Third Reich. He was a mentor and a friend to young Dietrich. And in 1933 he wrote that it was time for him to come home from London: 'You are a German,...the house of your church is on fire,...you must return to your post by the next ship.' (Hilton, Allen, *A House United: How the Church Can Save the World*, vii).

Pastor Allen Hilton (who wrote the book *House United* that I've invited you to read this summer) thinks that if Barth were alive today, he'd write the Christian churches of the US an urgent message: 'You are an American,...your nation's house is on fire, ...turn around and put it out!'

What fire? Well half of America would say the menacing conflagration comes from the damned liberals. And half would say from the damned conservatives. How much hysteria have you heard, read and experienced about the first presidential debate? Democrats fretting. Republicans dancing. Apocalyptic visions of what's at stake in a Trump or Biden presidency. The sense of existential threat to 'our' vision of America. Anguish along the fault lines of immigration, healthcare, gender identity, the size and role of government, abortion, gun politics, anti-racism, free speech, democratic principles, fitness of age and temperament.

It's no secret that our country is being pulled apart by polarizing hostilities, by 24-hour info-tainment, and by a lonely loss of identity deeper than partisan bigotry. And there's no doubt that we're only going to watch the us-versus-them animosity increase as we near November's presidential election.

In his 1858 pre-Civil-War speech – at a time of 17 free states and 15 slave states – Lincoln famously quoted Jesus: 'a house divided against itself cannot stand.' And Lincoln's prophecy was just three years out from civil war. Can you imagine where we might be even now if all the blue states were in the east and all the red states were in the west? Can you just hear the modern-day appropriations of the Declaration of Independence? 'When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another...'

Friends, what are the signs you see that our house is on fire? Let's just list a few:

- Apocalyptic nature of rage & tolerance of meanness/partisan bigotry
- People relocating geographically to be in political environments more akin to their own vision
- Moments of crisis like the pandemic being politicized into binary foodfight
- People no longer going home for Thanksgiving/Christmas to avoid politics at table
- Growth in political leaning as sense of (thin, unsatisfying) personal identity
- Consumption of news sources that fan our anger/anxiety to cement our attachments
- Government gridlock
- National agendas being fought at the level of the local city council or schoolboard
- People being shouted down before they speak on college campuses

-So our house is on fire. What are Christ-followers to do?

- Are we going to pour gasoline on it? A lot of church leaders and churches have, believing that 'righteous political convictions license us to nurse open disdain for half the nation' (Hilton, ix).
- Are we going to stand by helplessly wringing our hands over a situation so complex?
- Or because we are followers of Christ, do we have to come home from England and take some responsibility?

-In Christian circles I've often heard Jeremiah 29:11 quoted for good reason, to recall that we are not alone, that God is at work. It is encouraging: 'For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.' God is at work to redeem, to work his kingdom good.

But what often gets omitted is the context. The people of Jerusalem had been conquered in warfare and taken as slaves from Jerusalem to Babylon (present day Iraq). So these verses were part of a larger letter Jeremiah sent to God's people in Babylon. And what he wrote was really hard to swallow if you are living in exile hoping to hear word of a quick exit. And let's call 'exile' for present

purposes that place that feels oppressively unlike home (perhaps because the people imprisoning you there are trying to destroy it with their smug, oppressive vision of the way things should be). Think of him writing God's word to the blue states or the red states who are feeling not at home in the Divided States of America:

29 These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem ...: 4 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles...: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

[And then this conclusion...]

11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

What?! What was the Lord's word for His people feeling so lost and displaced and dispirited?

These were the people who asked: 'How can I sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?' Who wrote: 'By the waters of Babylon, we lay down and wept for Zion, for home, for Jerusalem, for the life of normalcy we hoped for.'

What was God's word to them? 'Invest in the place where you are. In this place of exile. Build. Plant. Marry. Bear children.'

The Lord calls for them to seek the welfare of the city to which they have been exiled, to seek the good of these people – their enemies, to pray for this place of pagan authority, to invest in it, to seek its good. Why? Because in seeking its shalom (welfare, wholeness, flourishing and delight), they will discover their own.

Doesn't that transform the way you hear Jeremiah 29.11? Doesn't it fill it with earthy, grounded, unsentimental, powerful meaning? 'For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to give you a future with hope (as you *invest* in the country of your sojourn, as you pray for it, as you invest in your neighbor, as you recall your identity not to be at war but to belong to the Lord).

-Friends, we know our own country, our own city, our own house is on fire. The question is this: Who is going to *do* something about the widening rift between 'us' and 'them'? The one that is exiling us from one another. Pastor Allen Hilton nominates those who follow Christ, who, regardless of their perspectives, have a far higher calling to seek the welfare of the city to which they have been exiled.

-Question: How does Jesus say people will know that his followers truly belong to *him*? [by their love, by their unity]

In John 13, he washes his disciples' feet and commands us to love one another as he has loved us. Why? *So that...* others will know we belong to him.

In John 17, Jesus prays to God the Father with these words: 'I ask ... that [those who believe in me] may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,^[1] so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.' (John 17.20-23)

-'One.' Jesus prays that his followers may be 'one' even as the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. The Greek word for this is *Koinonia*. Communion. Fellowship. Inter-penetrating lives. We are to enjoy a communion of loving unity that is like the Son's unity with the Father and the Father's unity with the Son.

-'Glory.' Jesus says that the 'glory' he has received from God he has passed on to believers to make us one. A good definition for the word 'glory' is 'essence.' You get to the *glory* of an onion when it makes you cry. Jesus has given us God's glory, God's very essence, the Spirit of Christ, the new self that seeks not sameness but peaceable relationship. Jesus also uses the word 'glory' in John to point to the cross. We get to the glory of Christ on the day of his crucifixion. Which means that in essence, he has given us the love of God that makes grave *sacrifices* for the other, even for the enemy, for the person who is not merely annoying but full of murderous vitriol. Christ has given us *himself*, dwelling in us, *himself* that sees all as God's children, *himself* that gives himself up, so that we might be unified in a grace we ourselves cannot generate.

Why? What is the purpose of unity, of being one? Jesus prays that we might be *one*, so that the world may know that God has sent him and has loved them even as God has loved him. It will be our countercultural unity that reveals to a polarized country who *Jesus* is. That he has come from God. And that this God is love.

Jesus is saying that those who believe have been **called to a unity that reflects who God is**. It's THAT BIG.

-How would it impact the Divided States of America if followers of Christ put out the fires and pursued A House United? What if people all over our country could look at Christians and say: 'see how they love one another and stay connected.' Well, it would be a good start, wouldn't it?

But what does unity in Christ look like? Does it require unity in our beliefs about God? And which ones? Are there some that are more important than others?

Does it require unity of perspective on what our beliefs lead us to espouse *politically*?

Does it mean a commitment to sharing physical space even when our beliefs and perspectives may differ? And if so, how do we honor our sense of what's true without some sort of unsatisfying, mushy compromise?

What is this unity that Jesus prays for his church?

-We Presbyterians are a 'confessional' church. Which means by tradition we are guided by the witness of confessions (written formulations) of faith made by our sisters and brothers at various moments in history. Confessions seek to mark out the good news of Christ in times when it is under threat. (Like, the Barmen Declaration, signed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, that would affirm the Lordship of Christ alone, not the Nazi Reich, over the Church).

The Confession of Belhar was adopted in 1986 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa. It was written as a protest against the harsh injustices of government-imposed Apartheid, which separated the races and imposed domination by those who were white.

The Confession of Belhar is a joyful statement of faith in Jesus. It lifts up the heart of the gospel as our enduring hope that because 'we have been reconciled with God and with one another... unity is...both a gift and an obligation of the church of Jesus Christ...' (Confession of Belhar).

How can those reconciled to Christ consent to remain separate? It is an offense to the gospel which overcomes the human sin of hateful separation. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. And that makes unity with our sisters and brothers a *gift*. That makes unity with our sisters and brothers an *obligation*, a proclamation of the new reality.

- I myself sense that a Christ-centered church in a blue city in a red state (like FPC) is *uniquely* gifted to answer the call to put out the fire of polarizing rage, to seek the welfare of our city, to pursue a house united.

And not only by getting good at *not* talking about what divides us. I believe there are many who are hungry to find a church where they can risk both bringing their whole selves and engaging others who see the world differently.

-I love the motto of the Moravian Church and wonder if its motto may point us forward:

'In things essential, unity; in things non-essential, liberty; in all things charity.' (Repeat)

Such important words. Meaning: there is the need to be together on what is essential to our hope in Christ; there is freedom for many perspectives on things that are not essential; and regardless of whether we are talking of things essential or things non-essential, there is to be charity (or love).

That motto could immediately send us scrambling to the next problem: 'All well and good, but what's essential and what's not? Isn't that the whole conflict?' But what if the conversation over what's essential and what's not first of all exhibits the humility to say that not everything is essential. And what if the whole conversation – what if all things – are covered by charity?

What if Christ and his love, real engagement over what's essential, not full agreement, becomes key? Conscientious Christians conflict. People disagree in good faith. And even where there is no full agreement over what is *essential*, Christ is honored by truth-seeking charity.

So say my neighbor is going to vote for Trump or Biden, and I just can't. Still living for the charity of Christ sets me free from making what happens in politics the center of my world and identity.

I missed the debate last week over which I've heard so much kvetching. I missed it because our church was at work so that three families in Mexico could have homes. And the world was better for our focus. We have seen Facebook celebrations by the families for which we built, where their whole communities are commenting, exulting, writing in Spanish: 'Can you believe these persons came from way north Montana because of Christ to build us homes?' Something eternal was happening. And somewhere in some studio somewhere in America were two men fumbling and posturing over a power that will pass away like mist.

This doesn't mean that presidential debates are unimportant to me. I'm an American Studies major. I've worked as a secretary for a US congressman. I think this stuff matters. And I'm appalled by the food fight they have become. But the food fight is not the main thing in my life or in yours. Political rage is not the main thing. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They matter. But more important – I'd go so far as to say, what's essential – are faith, hope and love...!

Celebration of the Lord's Supper

-Today we gather around the Lord's Table. It is the Table of unity. Where we experience the sacrifice of Christ, his broken body, that we might be made one body of sacrificial love. That we might be made one in the grace that reconciles us to God and one another. Made one by the Spirit of Christ, his tenderness in us for one another.

It is at our Lord's Table where we (re)discover Christ's Mercy for us that spills over into mercy for our neighbors, mercy for our enemies, mercy for the whole Church.

In the silence, let us pray thanksgiving for who Jesus is...for the one who reaches out to us tax collectors and sinners, the one who washes the feet of us who will desert, deny, and betray him....Let us pray thanksgiving that he embraces us with grace...(silence)

In the silence, let us pray for those other people. For sisters and brothers who position themselves on the other side of the political spectrum. For folks we have struggled to consider our family of faith... Let us pray for their fears and sadnesses and struggles...Let us pray for their joy...Let us pray for openness to understand their values and longings... (silence)

And in the silence, let us pray for all of us together, the followers of Jesus made one, gathered around the feast of forgiveness, joined in our broken need for the mercy of Christ, joined in the gift of his grace, joined in a common calling to speak the truth in love, seeking unity in things essential, liberty in things non-essential, and charity in all things...(silence)

[As you celebrate the Lord's Supper at home, you may either be part of the recorded service (where Pastor Dan will lead) or lead yourself by taking the bread in your hands and saying aloud:

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread.
And when he had given thanks, he broke it.
And he gave it to his disciples, saying, 'This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

[Then take the cup in your hands and say aloud:]

In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, and said 'This is the cup of the new covenant, sealed in my blood. Whenever you drink of it, do this in remembrance of me.'

Paul says that when we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord until he comes again.

Will the servers please come forward? (There are both bread and gluten free wafers so that all may participate.)

This is not a Presbyterian table. This is the Table of our Lord for his people across our country and across the earth. **He invites all who hunger for unity with God and one another to share in this feast which he has prepared.**

[Now Friends, whether one person is serving others or you are celebrating the Lord's Supper personally, tear off a piece of bread – as large as you wish! - and say:

The body of Christ, given for you, because he loves you.
(the one receiving or you yourself may add: Thanks be to God!)

Then dip the bread into the cup and say:

The blood of Christ, given for you, because he loves you.
(the one receiving or you yourself may add: Thanks be to God!)

Amen.

Communion Song: At the Table

At the table, all are equal, all approach the feast as guest.
None sit in the seat of honor: at the table, none are best.

At the table, none go hungry, none must steal or beg for bread;
all receive from God's abundance: at the table, all are fed.

Refrain 1: At the table, none go hungry; at the table, all are fed.

At the table, all are cherished, all are sought at any cost,
none abandoned or forsaken, at the table, none are lost.

At the table, none are finished, none sit selfishly content;
all are called to love in service:
from the table, all are sent.

Refrain 2: At the table, all are cherished; at the table, all are sent.

At the table, all are equal, at the table, all are fed.

David Bjorlin and Benjamin Brody***

SENDING

Sending Song: Jesus Shall Reign

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does its successive journeys run,
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till sun shall rise and set no more.

Blessings abound where'er He reigns, the pris'ner leaps to lose their chains,
The weary find eternal rest, and all the ones of want are blessed.

*Refrain: To our King be highest praise rising through eternal days.
Just and faithful, He shall reign: Jesus shall reign!*

People and realms of every tongue dwell on His love with sweetest song,
And infant voices shall proclaim their early blessings on His name. *Refrain*

Let every creature rise and bring blessing and honor to our King,
Angels descend with songs again, and earth repeat the loud amen! *Refrain*
Isaac Watts, John C. Hatton, Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty and Ed Cash**

Benediction

Leading in Worship This Morning:

Liturgist: Martha Ripley
Sermon and Communion: Dan Cravy
Musicians: Emma Thackston
Slide, Sound and Video Techs: Zane Reneau and Bill Maitland

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Pastor: Dan Cravy
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Church Secretary: Haleigh Adair
Bell Choir Director: Tomi Kent
Parish Associates: Rev. Janet Malone and Rev. Bob Schurr
Preaching Pastor, Blackfoot Church of the Potomac: Natalie Mauer

Prayer List

Ongoing Prayer Support: Victor Schlimgen, Eva Tsosie and son Chaske, Tom Tucker, Sheryl Tegelberg, Lou Power, Kelley Nicholson, Peggy Schalk, Betty Winchell, Janet Malone, Bob Maitland

Prayers for Health and Healing: Haleigh Adair, Carl Miller, Annabelle Olds, Pam Dubois, Jill Gilliam, Lori Guffin-Serra