

Sunday, March 15, 2020
Mantua Center Christian Church
MCCC Home Worship

(This service is designed after the Camp Christian Chi-Rho Evening Prayers service order.)

You will need:

A candle and match

Bible

Paper

Bread and Juice (if desiring communion)

***If worshipping with others, have people take the parts and scripture readings. If worshipping “alone” remind yourself you are not alone and follow the liturgy straight through.*

Order of Worship

GREETING

This is the Day that the Lord has made, Let us rejoice and be glad in it! (*Psalm 118:24*)

Hello Church! My name is Rev. Chad Delaney and I’m glad to be with you. I’m serving today with our wonderful Student Pastor, Sarah Smith. As pastors at Mantua Center, we’re glad to lead you in worship today.

Wherever we gather--in person or Spirit--we gather as church family and as part of the Body of Christ. Everyone is welcome here whether it is your first touch with Mantua Center or this is your church home.

As we worship in this new format today, you can stay just as you are to watch and listen. I would also invite you (if you are so inclined) to get a Bible, Bread & Juice (*or some elements that would suffice*), and a candle with a match. There will be times during the service where we will utilize these. So feel free to “pause” it here and get what you need if desired.

On this 3rd Sunday in Lent we continue our theme of Gathering Around the

Table. We are taking this time to re-imagine, re-connect, re-engage with what communion means to us. This week we seek the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit. At the Table the Holy Spirit is present with us and our scripture today says that the Holy Spirit will be with us always and remind us of all Jesus said and taught.

We are together across time and space, but together we are still a community seeking to have Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Arms. We gather together not as perfect people, but as people on journey seeking to be in relationship with God and One another.

CALL to WORSHIP -

Let's turn our minds from other things and light a candle to remind us of God's presence and the power of the Holy Spirit that is among us.

Light a Candle.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 139:1-12

¹ O Lord, you have searched me and known me. ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. ³ You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. ⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. ⁷ Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night', ¹² even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

SONG OF Praise - Seek Ye First

PASTORAL PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER by Sarah Smith

As we enter into this conversation with the divine, I invite you to relax where you are into a comfortable praying position. Let your shoulders fall

away from your ears. Unclench your jaw and allow the muscles along your shoulders and spine to relax. Take a deep breath in... and out...

God who finds us wherever we are, we cry out to you in a time of confusion. The world is shifting, and we feel the pressure to panic, to prepare, to isolate, to wait. In the midst of the messy middle where we find our souls have started to crumble into fear, bolster us. Remind us that we are never alone. Prepare us to face the uncertainty with the certainty that you hold the whole world in your hands.

God who calls us to action and rest, each in its own due time, we ask now for you to guide our hearts to which we need to partake in. Do you call us to the margins to help with those who do not have the resources to weather the storm? Do you call us to enfold ourselves in the peace that comes from sustained intentional prayer? This Lenten season, we listen to your call. We follow your voice where you lead us.

God of wonders, this season is full of surprises. The spring is dawning. Light peeks over the horizon even in the darkest of nights. Help us sustain our hope until the morning, we pray.

And hear us now, as together, even separated by distance, we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us:

SCRIPTURE

Our second scripture today is from the Gospel According to John 14:15-27. Listen, Listen, Listen...

¹⁵ ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. ¹⁸ ‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself

to them.’ ²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, ‘Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?’ ²³Jesus answered him, ‘Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.’ ²⁵ ‘I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

SERMON - by Rev. Chad Delaney
Holy Spirit: Both Comforted and Called

“Chester Raccoon stood at the edge of the forest and cried.”

This is how a great little children’s book called “The Kissing Hand” by Audrey Penn starts. In the book Chester wants to stay with his mother and friends instead of heading off to school for the very first time. And so he stands on the edge of the forest filled with worry. His mother is standing nearby knowing this must happen but also wanting to comfort him.

So mom goes to the little guy at the edge of the forest and speaks gently with him. She tells him she has something for him that her mother gave to her and her mother before that. She takes his hand and kisses it plop in the center of his palm. She calls it a kissing hand and that every time he felt lonely or needed to feel someone close, all he needed to do was press his palm to his cheek. The book says, “Chester felt his mother’s kiss rush from his hand, up his arm, and into his heart...he tingled with special warmth.” Mom would always be there. No matter how old or young we are, we resonate with that need to be known, loved, and accompanied on this journey of life.

In the Gospel of John, chapter 14 we meet up with Jesus and the Disciples in some tender moments at the edge of their own forest. Jesus has just washed their feet in the Upper Room. Together they are sitting around the Table taking in these moments unsure of what is ahead of them. Jesus knows that soon he will be gone. Jesus has been warning them about this, but it's finally setting in. They're all asking questions--Peter wants to know where Jesus is going. Philip wants Jesus to show them the Father. Judas wonders how Jesus would reveal himself. Each of them is trying to soak in every moment with Jesus...and Jesus can feel their angst. With every breath Jesus is offering his last words of guidance, wisdom, and reassurance.

In the face of this uncertainty Jesus tells them that God is sending them an Advocate to shepherd them through this time. The word in Greek is *Parakletos* and it means an Advocate, a Counselor, a Helper, a Consoler, a Comforter----the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is probably one of the least understood ideas within the Christian faith....one of those notions that is less understood with words and better understood through music, art, and poetry. How do you really explain something you can't see or touch or taste? But maybe words like "a rush into the heart tingling with special warmth" could be helpful. Or words Jesus uses in the passage throughout... "love, home, truth and peace." The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God, the power of life and love made manifest in the world. The fruits of the Spirit---Love, Joy, Peace...making a home within us and expressed in the world around us. The Holy Spirit that little urging in your mind, the inclination in your heart, voice of truth given through a stranger or friend...Nudging us toward goodness.

And Jesus says this Holy Spirit, this Advocate, will come both to Comfort them and to Call them.

See, this Holy Spirit will come to them and remain with them always reminding them of Jesus' words of comfort and consolation. Words of peace spoken into their

anxiousness. “Do not let your hearts be troubled, do not be afraid” “I will not leave you orphaned, I am coming to you.” “Because I live you also will live.” “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.” Words of life that have resonated in the hearts and minds of the faithful for generations. Calming fears and giving courage to face what lies before them. I imagine these words going in their hands, up their arms, into their hearts tingling with special warmth.

Yet, the Holy Spirit also comes to call them. A counselor and helper reminding them of the words and teachings of Jesus that call every disciple to greater faithfulness. ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments.’ If you love Jesus, you’ll follow him--live out his teachings, continue his ministry of love, mercy, and new life. Continue the ministry of love and servanthood they’ve started together. Love God. Love Neighbor. Love Enemies. Forgive. Refrain from Judgment. Heal. Serve.

The Holy Spirit comes to live within us, makes a home amongst us as we live and move and have our being in Jesus Christ.

Here we are as a nation and world, standing at the edge of the forest and worrying. Some of us more than others, yet all of us are involved in the intensity of this moment in history. There was a time when I used to think that when I would reach a certain age the worrying would end. We try to tell ourselves that we would reach some point of ultimate stability and no longer will worry about what is next. But, in truth, there is always a new adventure or struggle that awaits us. It's part of what it means to be human. There will be something happening in the world around us or within ourselves. Maybe with our vocation or financial situation. Maybe with our children, our parents, our family. Something inevitably emerges to challenge us. And so we say come, Holy Spirit, come into our lives again. In our homes, at our desks, in our cars, in our classrooms, in our kitchens...and yes at the Table...meet us here and fill us with your presence. Remind us of who we are. Comfort us. Call us.

The World Council of Churches says, “The Holy Spirit is the immeasurable strength of love which makes communion possible. The bond between the Lord’s Table and the mystery of God reveals the role of the Holy Spirit as that of the One who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive.” As we partake of communion later, may Jesus’ words stay with you. Hear his comfort. Hear his Call. In this time of uncertainty, may the Holy Spirit surround you and fill you making Jesus’ words come alive within you and around you now and always.

Let us pray...

Holy Spirit, you are the Comforter, the Consoler, the Helper. Move us and lead us now as your people. Still these storms that are around us and within us. Meet us wherever we are, here at this communion table, our kitchen table, our end tables. As a human family, we face much uncertainty in these days. Come near to us. Calm our fears, comfort us in our anxiousness. Give us courage and ingenuity. Give us boldness and creativity. Fill the distance between us. Give us compassion and hearts full of love to confront these challenges, remember the most vulnerable, and respond to a world in need. Melt us, Mold us, Fill Us. Use Us. Spirit of the Living God, make your home among us now and always.

Amen.

MUSIC RESPONSE

COMMUNION - by Sarah

Welcome

As we gather around the table of our own homes, we are mindful that we still gather as part of the Body of Christ around Christ’s Table. Christ’s Table is not our own--Christ is the host and we are welcomed with open arms.

Remote Communion

“For the purposes of remote communion, I invite you this week to engage in a thought exercise. On the night when Jesus met with his disciples in the upper room, took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying: “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” Through this, Jesus is inviting us to partake in the body of the church: our core values and beliefs; and receive bread for the journey of life.

What has sustained you this week? Where have you seen the bread of life?

In the same way also Jesus took the cup after supper, gave thanks, and gave it to them saying: ‘Drink of it all of you; this cup is the New Covenant, for the remission of sins. As often as you drink it, do so in remembrance of Me. Jesus offered his disciples and all of us the cup of abundance if only we would take it in his name. As we take the cup, we fill up on the hopes and messages of the church. We quench our thirst for knowledge, acceptance, and liberation.

What has bolstered your wellbeing this week? Where have you felt God outpouring?

When we gather together to take communion, we often think about the community that is partaking with us. Be still and know that we are all present in the Kingdom of God as we are present, in spirit, with you now.”

Prayer

Lord, bless this bread and cup, may it symbolize your broken body given to us so that we might be made whole. May these emblems remind us of the power of your Holy Spirit always present with us--speaking into our lives your unending grace, forgiveness, and love we know in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Words of Institution

We remember that on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he took the bread and broke it, gave thanks and said to his Disciples, “This is my body which is give for you, eat of it all of you in remembrance of me.” In like manner he took the cup and blessed it saying, “This is the cup of the new

covenant in me, as often as you drink of it do so in remembrance of me.”
For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the
Lord’s life, death, and resurrection until he comes again. Remember,
all...ALL are welcome at the Lord’s Table.

(Share in the Bread and Cup together)

Short time of Music while people partake

BENEDICTION

Thank you for being with us today. Will you bow with me for our closing prayer,
written by members of the Grace Church in London, England:

"God who made all things and is beyond our imagining thank you for the gift of
life, the gift of today, the gift of this time of worship. We thank you for Christ
who came into our world to be with us. We thank you for the Holy Spirit who
animates our lives and worship. Living God...we’re here. You’re here. May that
be enough. Though we see dimly...though we know in part...though you are a
mystery...We long for you...We look for you...We wait for you. Amen."

*~ from **Grace Church** in Ealing, London.*

Go in Peace