

**Sunday, March 22, 2020**  
**Mantua Center Christian Church**  
**MCCC Home Worship**

**You will need:**

*A candle and match*

*Bible*

*Paper*

*Bread and Juice (if desiring communion)*

**Order of Worship**

**GREETING**

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

Welcome to our online worship with the Mantua Center Christian Church. My name is Rev. Chad Delaney. I'm serving today with our Student Pastor, Sarah Smith and our Director of Music and Pianist, Adam Petrosino. We are blessed to worship with you.

*Together we are a community seeking to have Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Arms. We gather not as perfect people, but as people on a journey seeking to be in relationship with God and One another. Wherever we gather--whether in-person or online--we are part of the Body of Christ and ALL are welcome.*

Today as we worship (if you are so inclined) you can get a Bible, Bread & Juice (*or some elements that would suffice*), and a candle with a match. Feel free to "pause" it here and get what you need if desired.

Here on this 4th Sunday in Lent, during this difficult season of difficult realities and changes, we gather Around the Table to find our common center, to remember the most vulnerable, and to invite God's peace to reign in our lives.

**Call to Worship**

Family of God, take a deep breath...Turn our minds and hearts from other

things and light a candle to remind us of God's abiding presence.

*Light a Candle*

## **SONG OF PRAISE - Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing**

### **SCRIPTURE - Philippians 4:4-7 - Chad**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### **PASTORAL PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER - Sarah Smith**

Today's prayer is adapted from many smaller prayers contained in the March 15 and 22nd editions of *Enfleshed, Liturgy that Matters*.

As we enter into conversation with the divine, I invite you to be kind to your body. Let your spine fall into a comfortable resting position. Let your shoulders roll down, away from your ears. Allow the muscles in your jaw to relax and unclench your teeth. Take a deep breath in... and out... as we find each other within the Spirit of the Divine.

Let all who yearn for connection, all who hunger for justice and thirst for bodily renewal come and be replenished.

With hope and expectation, we bring all that our soul's desire.

Let everyone weary from isolation or overwhelmed by life's troubles come and find rest in God's care.

All those who come seeking community are received in Holy Embrace.

May the presence and provision of God be manifest among us that all may have what they need.

We come to give, we come to receive, we come to grow in love.

God Who Knows, all that we experience is held in your care. Nothing is hidden from you - not the burdens we bear in public or the quiet pain felt only in secret. Your love for us welcomes everything that aches. With hearts open to your Spirit, we bring all our hopes and fears to you.

Holy Mother, You are always reaching out to the people, places, and parts of us that are weary from isolation or cast out by exclusion. You come to lift up the lowly and

make prophets of the dejected. With thanks for the subversive ways of your love, we bring what we have to the table you have set.

You meet us in the hard places.

The territories of struggle.

The sites of desperation.

The places of deepest need.

In our fears and our pain,

You come beside us.

With a commitment to extending this care

to one another and all our neighbors,

so that none may be left alone,

Your Spirit fills us with peace.

God, in your presence, we are nourished in abundance. You make our weary hearts glad. You awaken us to the ordinary gifts that surround us. May fears of scarcity never let us forget all that we have. Keep us from greed. Keep us from selfishness. Let generosity and hospitality always pour forth from this place where you have made your home within each of us.

And hear us now, sweet comfort, as united we pray the prayer that you son taught us, praying...

### **SCRIPTURE - Mark 4:35-41**

Listen, Listen, Listen...for a word from God

Mark 4:35-41 (NRSV)

**35** On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." **36** And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. **37** A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. **38** But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" **39** He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. **40** He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" **41** And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

**SERMON - by Rev. Chad Delaney**  
**Mega Storm, Mega Calm**

Today we are revisiting a well-known and powerful story found in the Gospel about the Calming of the Storm. At this point in the story, the disciples have been called and they've been soaking it all in. They've watched Jesus' preach, teach parables, heal, and confront the powers. Everything was going just as advertised until that day Jesus said..."Hey y'all, let's go across to the other side." "What's that?" I can imagine there might be some apprehension about that. So far they've stayed on the familiar side of the Sea of Galilee. They've fished and boated along those shores for many years...it was a place of familiarity. Nevertheless, they follow Jesus now and so find themselves in a boat with him setting off into uncharted territory.

Any nerves they had about this little trip were exacerbated when the storm starts brewing. Dark clouds roll in, the winds get going, thunder claps and lightning strikes. Well, they get blasted by a sudden storm. In the Greek it's a lailaps megas (lah'-ee-laps meg'-as). A BIG, a MEGA storm or whirlwind or hurricane. This is big trouble and they are in immediate danger. So this here is the tipping point of the story. Many of us have heard the story a hundred times so we already know how it ends. But in these moments here is where we get to see the meddle of these disciples. They're going God knows where, the storm raging around them. How do they respond to this? How do they react?

Well, the waves start beating on the boat. The scripture says at this point the boat is already being swamped. The chaos of the storm is enveloping them in every way. Overwhelmed by it all can't you see them with buckets throwing water overboard? People shouting orders, people tossed about, people praying, people cursing! The storm is crushing them.

And someone finally thinks...Where is Jesus? Looking around...maybe he's shoveling water out of the boat? Maybe he's steering? Maybe he's hoisting the mainstay? *I have no idea what that means.* Or Maybe Jesus was deep in prayer. Where is he?! Finally they hear someone shout..."Found him!" He's literally sleeping in the stern of the ship. Asleep on a cushion. Aaaachem! Seriously Jesus? We have the storm of a lifetime and you're sleeping! "TEACHER!" the Disciples say. "Do you not care that we are perishing?" *PAUSE..*

In the middle of the storm, some of our deepest questions for God just pop out.

So they're standing there with the storm raging around them just incredulous with the teacher. Red-faced, BROWS furrowed, just absolutely furious. *Did I mention these were Jesus' disciples?*

And what a powerful question they ask. One which has crossed the lips of many-a-believer over the centuries. Very human to wonder--in the face of the storms of life--what in the world is God up to?! Here we are struggling, hurting, and tossed to and fro...and you are sleeping, Lord? Do you not care?

Well, cool as a cucumber Jesus wakes up, stands up, (*can you picture the sigh and eye roll*)--and rebukes the wind. "Peace, be still" he says. The wind stops and the Bible says there was a "dead" calm. It's translated as "dead calm" but the Greek here is that same MEGA word again--Jesus brings the mega calm.

So in the passage there is both a Mega Storm and a Mega Calm.

Jesus rebuked the wind and now it's the disciples' turn. "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

Jesus makes a powerful point. The power of God's Presence--the Mega Calm Christ brings, as it turns out, is even more powerful than the Mega-Storm that can swirl around you. The Disciple of Jesus may be moved to ask...In the midst of the storms of life will I be inundated by the storm...or inundated by the Calm of Jesus?

A Pax Christi--a Christian peace organization--offers this telling of the story:

*When the waves first rose and the boat began to rock,  
The apostles worked hard and with hope in order to survive the storm raging  
around them.*

*But then they lost heart and allowed the storm outside to come inside.*

*It's easy to imagine the apostles as frantic, disconnected, out of control. In  
their desperation they waken Jesus who questions their faith and calms the  
storm by projecting his inner stillness, his inner harmony, his inner peace.*

*Sometimes we are more like the apostles. We have allowed the terror around  
us to become a part of us. Too often we only worsen the situation by projecting  
our fear and guilt and despair.*

*What we want to do is become like Jesus---to have that still center that nothing  
can disturb.*

In this season of confusion and fear...we do well to resist the toxic theology often bandied about proclaiming that if you have enough faith, you won't have any storms. You won't have any sickness. You won't have struggles on the outside or inside. This passage and the remainder of the Gospel story is proof-positive that a relationship with Jesus doesn't give you an immunity force-field. Jesus is not Storm-Prevention. The storms will come.

But as we venture into uncharted territory of this world we live in now...in the middle of this mega storm...might we seek the Mega Calm that is Jesus. Will we be inundated by the worry, fear, and chaos fomenting in the world? Allow the storm outside become the storm inside? Or will we trust that always within us and within our communities of strength...is a place that can never be claimed by the terrors of the world. To remind ourselves daily, hourly, by the minute of who we are and whose are. That Jesus is in the boat with us and will never leave us. Family of God...in these hours and days....Take time to breathe. To pray. To read. To walk. To listen to music. Tend to the inner workings of the soul. Nurture your relationship with God and with one another. Take time to visit with the one the Disciples said of: "Who is this that even the winds and waves obey him?" Who is this that can bring calm even in the face of a storm like that? Christ meets us there...saying, 'Peace, be still'.

Let us pray together

O God whose calm is greater than the most powerful forces in this world, we pray for those who feel swamped by the storm. We pray for the doctors, nurses, caregivers. For grocery and retail clerks. For those who are sick and need care. For the least of these among us.

In our work and in our homes...enable us to be still and know that You are God. Remind us you stay with us in the whirlwind of everyday life. Your Holy Spirit there to strengthen, comfort, and guide us in the midst of the storm.

O still, small voice, speak to us as we set off another week in a new world. Surround us, fill us with your peace that passes all understanding, But help us not just receive your peace, but become sharers of it. In these hours to resist the foment of fear, hoarding, and prejudice. And be makers of your Peace in acts of listening, compassion, generosity, and love...in our homes, in our communities, in our world. We pray all this in the name of the One who calmed the raging sea. Amen.

**MUSIC RESPONSE - When The Poor Ones**

## COMMUNION - by Sarah Smith

1 Corinthians 11:17-22

### *Remote Communion*

“For the purposes of remote communion, I invite you this week to engage in a thought exercise. Originally, our text for the week was a harsh criticism of the church from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 11. I will read verses 20-22: “20 So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, 21 for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. 22 Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!” Today, when we take the bread of life, we remember our siblings in Christ that are without: those who have no homes to social distance from, those who did not have the means to prepare for this national trauma, those who are alone and hurt and scared.

What has sustained you this week? Where have you needed the comfort of the body of Christ?

In an email devotional on March 19, 2020, Father Richard Rohr wrote that suffering is allowing someone else’s pain to influence ours in a real way. If we consider that drinking in this pain is a way to prompt the church into change and growth, this experience is probably similar to drinking from a firehose. When we ask for the cup of transcendence, the cup of salvation, we are asking to take part in a community that certainly celebrates joys, but also experiences pains. Our strength comes from sharing that cup.

When did you feel as if you were overwhelmed by suffering this week? Where have you felt God outpouring or overpouring?

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.”



*Intro to Partaking*

Having shared in prayerful communion with our spirit and spiritual community, having laid down our suffering and offered up the blessings of this week, we gather at this table in gratitude. As we gather around the tables 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.

*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)*

**BENEDICTION - Chad**

Thank you so much for joining us today. Let's bow for the Benediction.

O God whose calm is greater than the most powerful forces in this world, enable us to be still and know that You are God. You stay with us in the whirlwind of everyday life, breathe in us. Your Holy Spirit to strengthen, comfort, and guide us in the midst of the storm.

O still, small voice, speak to us as we depart. That may we not just receive your peace, but become sharers of it. In these hours to resist the foment of fear, hoarding, and prejudice. And be makers of your Peace in acts of listening, compassion, generosity, and love...in our homes, in our communities, in our world. We pray all this in the name of the One who calmed the raging sea. Amen.