

Sunday, March 29, 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 5th Sunday in Lent, during we gather around the Table recognizing that God's Kindom is our midst, that we can bring our grief and questions to God, and that God will always be with us.

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

OPENING HYMN. This Is The Day #286

INVITATION TO CELEBRATION AND GIVING



In times like these we are mindful of the pressures and uncertainties people are facing. In the midst of that, our church may not be meeting in-person but we are still active trying to meet needs in our community! Here are some ways we are making a difference in this time.

- We've had over 25 people participate in our Zoom fellowship calls to have devotion and prayer.
- We've had over 500 views of our online worship services and over 50 downloads of the podcast.
- Our Elders and Care Team are mobilizing our Phone Tree to reach out to

our congregation

- This week we donated diapers collected by our Chi-Rho Youth and the remaining blessing bag materials at the church to Family & Community Services homeless and women's shelters. Keep an eye out for future connections with them.
- Kids' Weekend Meals is now serving over 120 kids a week with many volunteers making it happen!

In so many ways, our church, our giving is making a difference. We are grateful to all who continue to give offerings through our website, texting to give, and snail mail. We hope everyone can find ways to be generous with their community in big and small ways. May it be so.

SCRIPTURE - Chad

Psalm 130

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. ² Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! ³ If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. ⁵ I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in the Lord's word I hope; ⁶ my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with the Lord is great power to redeem. ⁸ It is the Lord who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

PASTORAL PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER - Sarah Smith

As we enter into this conversation with the divine, I invite you to assume a comfortable praying position. Let your body assume a resting position that is comfortable for your spine. If you are upright, roll your shoulders away from your ears. All of us can unclench the muscles of our jaws, let the tension fall out of your neck, your shoulders, your arms, your legs. Take a deep breath in... and out... as we enter into conversation with the divine.

God of the dead and God of the living, hold us close as we linger in these delicate days. May we perceive with clarity all that you would have us glean from what surrounds. Where a collective lack of love and justice are failing us, embolden us

to live differently - today. Let your Spirit come swiftly and transform us with hope.

Though we face difficult truths and realities, we do so in your company and the company of one another. Together, we can hold what must be held. Together, we can support those who need it most. Together, we can tend life even in the midst of death. You are with us.

Loving Sustainer we ask for your hand to be on those of us called to be essential. Be with our doctors, nurses, EMTs, and medical staff as they face resource and hope shortages. Be with them as they stare down the barrel of this pandemic that grips the world. Watch over our drivers who are moving all of the essentials from coast to coast. May they find your hospitality at every stop they need to make, then make it home, safe and healthy, to their loved ones. Be with the ones who keep us clean: our garbage men and city maintenance workers who have not received nearly enough of our gratitude up to this point. Be with the people afflicted already and the people who will receive positive tests in the coming days.

Beloved One, you multiply all that we bring in love. As we remember those struggling with lack today - lack of connection, lack of rest, lack of resources, or lack of hope - we remember you can turn even the smallest offerings into an abundance of hope. Make us generous in spirit as we seek to center the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors.

We pray for the homeless, the transitory, the poor, the marginalized who are not receiving the care they need in this time. Bring them warmth and care and peace. Move our leaders in the direction of compassion and justice. Help us continue to find ways to support each other even as we are called to be physically distant.

When death and destruction surrounds, we cry out to You from the depths. Love compels our weeping, our despair, our worry. We are bone of one another's bone, flesh of one another's flesh. Our souls are knitted together in ways beyond our understanding. And so the suffering of our neighbor becomes our own. Love, ingrained in us since our beginning, binds us together at the deepest levels. This connection is a deeply Sacred thing. It means we are vulnerable to

deep pain and loss in the face of death. It also means we are capable of rising together in the midst of great pain in ways that far exceed what we can imagine alone. In holding one another, in telling truths that remain, in creating beauty, in tending and grieving what is lost, You move within us. The power of Your love births new signs of hope through us.

And hear us now, Lord, as united we pray the prayer your Son taught us, praying...

SCRIPTURE -

John 11: 17-37

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles[b] from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

24 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had

been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

37 But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

The word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to god.

SERMON - Sarah Smith

Holy Sophia, May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart bring peace and knowledge to your Kindom today and always. Amen.

Well church, we are in Week 3 of our trek into this strange and new time and week 5 of the lenten season. From the research I have done, the messages we have heard in the schools, and the trends that we are seeing internationally, we are still entering into the thick of it. There is more to come.

All I see now across my TV and social media timelines is news about mounting numbers of sick and mounting death tolls. I see folks that say that this is just the flu, that people are overreacting, that everything should go back to normal,

whatever normal meant to you. I see folks hoarding their resources, fear taking over and allowing them to become greedy as they prepare to lock away for the foreseeable future. I listen to those who are already suffering personal losses of family and friends, young and old. I watch and see the medical staff running out of energy, of resources, of hope. I watch teacher and preacher friends burnout as they struggle with transferring community based vocations into online mediums. And I don't know about you, but through all of this and the order to shelter in place, it feels a little like I'm just sitting around as the world is falling apart.

This Sunday is the last Sunday before Holy Week. The last Sunday before people throw down the palms and welcome in the Messiah before he, later in the week, is killed for the very same folks. Throughout Lent, we have been hit with changes one after the other. A joke I saw going around the internet said, "I hadn't planned on giving up quite this much for Lent." I laughed at the time, but through the feeling of the ground shifting out from under me, I have also realized that these changes, apocalyptic as they may be, are the heart of the Lenten season to me.

Lent is a season of repentance and reflection - both on a personal and community level. On Ash Wednesday, we recognize our personal sins, but every year without fail, I don't see the systemic sins being recognized: who is feeding the hungry -well, now it's the schools and food pantries making sure that everyone remains fed. Who is sheltering the poor - I have watched international hotels opening their doors to the homeless to shelter in place, calls for rent freezes and bill freezes to help with financial burdens brought about by this unprecedented time.

But the elephant in the room is the fact that this systemic reflection is coming at a major cost. We are surrounded by fear, surrounded by death, more bad news every day. Psychologists across the globe are recognizing this as an international trauma that we are ALL experiencing, together and apart. And what I feel most called to talk to y'all about today is grief.

In our passage from John, we enter into the story at a time of deep pain. Jesus, not welcome in the town that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus are living in, gets news that his beloved, Lazarus, has died. When we come onto the scene, Jesus has

made his way to them with caution-only coming as close as outside of town where the girls can meet him. Both do, in their own time. Both ask why he didn't come sooner, why he waited. "If you would have been here, my brother wouldn't have died!" They cried. And then, Jesus wept too. This, church, could have been Jesus's first experience with grief, and he started it by coming together with loved ones and weeping.

I bring up this morbid story to make sure that everyone is giving themselves permission to feel their own feelings. You might be grieving a lost job, a lost schedule, a lost opportunity, or a lost loved one. This pandemic has surpassed historic numbers and is still climbing. Your fears and tears and anger and numbness are to be expected. It doesn't make you weaker to acknowledge what you're feeling. What I invite us all to do is to move towards community. Set up a new schedule at home that includes one phone call or video chat a day at least. Start journaling, start cooking and drop off your favorite recipe at a neighbors house. Call each other for support as we move through this.

After the passage I read, Jesus facilitates the first resurrection-the prequel to what will come. Lazarus rises from his tomb in the work of a major miracle. Before we get to the miracle, though, before we can move into the light of living fully again, we have to mourn what we have lost. We have to process those feelings to rebirth something new. We have to see the death of an entire system in order to see where Love can grow a new one. We can now see clearly our students that do not get food without going to school every day. We see LGBTQ+ college students facing homelessness as college campuses close. We see elderly and immunocompromised people being told that they are expendable. We see financially secure folks realize that their savings can only get them so far. We see vulnerabilities of the system that have always been there, finally revealed across the globe. May this baptism by fire that we are living through illuminate the spaces that are dear to us while eliminating the spaces that keep us from holy community so that we too can be resurrected when all is said and done. There is light on the horizon- death comes before rebirth, but through it all, we are the body of Christ, United by faith even when separated by distance. May we help clear the way for the Spirit to move through the world. May we be prepared and ready for the resurrection to follow.

May it be so.

HYMN OF RESPONSE In This Very Room #295

COMMUNION - by Chad Delaney

Invitation to Communion

This week I was touched by a prayer by the wonderful Rev. Joan Brown Campbell. The first line of the prayer goes... “Creator God, we see you in the rainbow where the storm and the sunlight meet.”



I don't know about you but these days I often find myself in a space where the storm and sunlight meet. I am constantly aware of the storms around us---the sudden changes, the worries about the virus, our health, job loss and an uncertain future. On the other hand, I'm finding sunlight in new connections being made, the virtual community being created around us, the incredible courage of our medical workers, the creativity of teachers and children, and just the simple joy of taking a walk, breathing the fresh air, and seeing the green buds on trees. We are indeed amongst storms and sunlight in these days.



When we gather around the Table, we come recognizing the darkness and light found there. This Lent, we are walking with Jesus to the cross and so we are profoundly aware of the grief, violence, death, and brokenness in the world. We can't ignore it and we shouldn't. Yet we also come celebrating his powerful acts of generosity, sacrifice, courage, and unconditional love which has brought transformation to all. At this Table we remember all Jesus is--what he lived, died, and rose for. We catch a glimpse of God's Kin-dom made manifest in the world. A place where all are welcome. Where all are known and cared for. Where Grace and Forgiveness abound. Where all are made whole in the awesome redemptive power of God. Christ meets us here at this Table.



“Creator God, we see you in the rainbow where the storm and the sunlight meet.” and as Rev. Campbell closes her prayer...”And where the storm and sunlight meet, may thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.”

In those tender places where the storm and sunlight meet, let's look for the God, let's look for the rainbows. And think too...how might each of us--this week--become rainbows to those around us?

So today, we gather Around this Table looking for inspiration and hope to catch a glimpse of the Kindom of God and to be the people Christ calls us to be.

Prayer of Blessing

Let us pray...

God who meets us in our grief and questions, in our gratitude and joy, we thank you for drawing close to us in the time of vulnerability and turmoil. We know you come to us just as we are...and so we come before you both carrying our burdens and bursting with thanksgivings ready to lay them all at your feet. Meet us here in the elements before us. Shine your light upon us that be still and know that you are God. Bless us as we partake in this Holy Meal. In Jesus Name, Amen. *(END PHOTO)*

Words of Institution

Together we recall 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)

COMMUNION HYMN - "Come Share the Lord" #408

BENEDICTION - Sarah Smith

Thank you so much for joining us today. Please bow for the benediction:

As we depart from the virtual presence of one another,
we do so in the knowledge that Love Eternal holds us together.
Until we come together again,

may you find courage in the witness of the faithful.
May the peace of the Holy Spirit move through your every breath.
And may you trust in the Wisdom of Christ within you. Amen.

Well, that's it for us this week church, we very much hope to see you again soon.
Be on the watch for weekly Zoom meetings facilitated by Pastor Chad to help us
connect while the church has left the building. Don't forget about your
homework: reach out and connect with a loved one.

If you liked this video and would like to see more, make sure you hit subscribe to
MCCC's YouTube channel. We will be putting up videos every week until it is
possible to meet again. If you have any comments or suggestions, reach out and
let us know! We would love to hear how we can better serve you in Christ. All
our love, until next week!