

Sunday, April 19th
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 - CHAD

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

The Peace of the Risen Christ be with you as begin this Easter season. Welcome to worship this week with the Mantua Center Christian Church. Together...seeking to have Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Arms bearing the love and likeness of the Risen Christ.

CALL to WORSHIP - Chad

Family in Christ, let's turn our minds and hearts from other things and light a candle to remind us of God's abiding presence.

Light a Candle

OPENING SCRIPTURE - Natalie Langham

Mark 6:7-13

⁷He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

OPENING HYMN - All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name #91

CHILDREN'S MOMENT - Ally Hurd

MESSAGES of KINDNESS - Members at MCCC

- What ways can you show kindness in the world?

PASTORAL PRAYER - Chad

God of all Life and Love,

We praise you this day for the Risen Christ. For this story of new life that shapes who we are and drives us as your people. As we navigate the difficult terrain of life we know that there is no darkness your light can't creep into. There is no one who is unreachable or fully lost. Each one and all of your creation bears the marks of your Resurrecting Spirit.

In all things we are seeking to give you thanks. Even in the midst of this crisis as all the changes have challenged our resolve...we are looking for your presence and mercies. Looking for your light and love. Help us to not get lost in the ebbs and flows, ups and downs that each day brings...but ground us in your very presence. Help us to make our decisions through prayer and your wisdom. Help us to examine our own hearts and repent when we have thought cruelly, impatiently, or with prejudice. Help us to focus our spirits on being your light in the midst of any darkness around us. Lead us through this time.

In this time we indeed give you thanks for all the acts of kindness being shared. Whatever religion, faith, or creed, Lord, pull us together to reach out as neighbors and friends. Lend us creativity by your Spirit as we find new ways to be and do and have relationship. Help us love one another.

Today we lift to you and remember all your children who are in need. Be with sick and the imprisoned and the refugee. Be with the outcast and forgotten. Be with the doctors, truck drivers, and cleaning service. The paramedic, the nurse, the cashier, and grocery clerk. Be with all those who every day are guiding us and helping us through this difficult time.

God we lift our concerns to you now in Silent Prayer.....

Now join us together where we are in saying the prayer Jesus taughts us saying...

MUSIC OFFERING - What a Wonderful World by Beth & Ellie Schabel

SCRIPTURE - Chad

Acts 1:1-14

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the

course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. ‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ ⁷He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, ‘People of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’ ¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

SERMON - Rev. Chad Delaney

40-Plus Days

As a youth minister and junior high youth leader over the years I have all sorts of ongoing gags or silly things I do with the kids...many of which are super-corny.

One of my favorites though is when new kids or young ones in the group will come to a meeting and start asking, “What are we going to do tonight?” It is the junior high version of “Are we there yet? Are we there yet?” They are not interested in sitting around. Let’s play a game. Run around the church. Go outside! Something to be active! So I greet all that energy with...”Well tonight we are going to all sit down and start with 45 minutes of deep, meditative, silent prayer.” And they just don’t know how to take it. “Is he messing with me?” Of course, I am. For them...Opening & Closing Prayer, fine. 45 min of silent prayer? Not so much. Sitting around and Intensive tending to the inner spiritual life” is not high on the priority list.

This Sunday we are beginning the Book of Acts as we get an inside look at those foundational days after Jesus was raised from the dead. Easter begins a season of 50 days until the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit is poured out on the church. When that day comes there will be a flurry of activity--preaching, healing, teaching, ministry in Jesus name! Disciples set loose on the world. But until Pentecost....what happened in the meantime? What did they do with those 50 days? Honestly I didn't pay much attention to that before...but there is some stuff for us to learn there.

For 40 of those days, the bible says they were meeting with and listening to the Risen Christ. Jesus was appearing to folks and speaking to them about the Kingdom of God

Now...this 40-day number should ring some bells for us. The number 40 shows up in the Bible a lot. The flood rains came for 40 days and 40 nights...the Israelites wandered the desert for 40 years....Moses was on Mt. Sinai getting the commandments for 40 days....Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days before beginning his ministry. Ok, Bible authors we get it. "40" is used over and over again in the bible not to report historical detail, but to symbolize a period of wilderness, wandering, waiting, testing, and listening in the person or people's life.

So for these 40 days they had been listening to the Risen Christ teach them about the Kingdom of God, but then Jesus tells them...it's going to be even longer. He tells them they aren't to go forth until the power of the Holy Spirit descends on them calling them to be witnesses from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Until then, though stay put. In those moments, Jesus is whisked away into the heavens right before their eyes. They are left alone...to wait. What do they do with that time?

Here we are on the 29th day from Governor DeWine's stay-at-home order and I'm kinda wondering the same thing. At first it felt like a little vacation from the world, but the realities of what is happening and the effects of the virus have really taken its toll

on us emotionally, physically, economically, spiritually. What do **we** do with our time as we wait for the world to open up again?

All of us are handling this time differently. For many of us, we are still just as active or moreso. There are many essential personnel and public servants are putting in even more hours than usual and even putting their lives at risk for all of us. Our deepest gratitude to all of you. Thank you.

So some of us feel a little sheepish about actually loving this time. Less obligations to the outside world. Working from home. Connecting to loved ones or having more alone time.

And many of us are struggling with this holding pattern. Told we can't leave our homes but for essentials. We've put a pause on our social lives. Our shopping trips. Our family gatherings. Our game nights. Our church services. Our volunteer opportunities. And it's wearing on us.

However you are dealing with this time...the question still emerges...what do we do with this time?

- Obviously, we can fill it with fluffy stuff which can be a great escape. Phone or computer games. Binge watching a show you've been wanting to watch.
- We can also be active and busy! Is there a room or closet I can clean? Work in the yard? Paint the spare room? Organize the bookshelf again. All ways to be productive.

All of those things can be good. We all need to deal and cope with things in the ways that help us the most. All of us are different.

But in reading the passage this week, I was pushed by what the disciples did. Told by Jesus to wait, they returned to Jerusalem and all the women and men that followed Jesus quote, "constantly devoted themselves to prayer."

Now---listen---I don't think they were literally praying 24 hours a day until Pentecost came, but we get the picture. That 40+ days of wilderness and waiting time they had...they were intentional about nurturing their life with God. They tended to the inner workings of their soul. They sought to connect with their Creator. They used that time to prepare their hearts, minds, and souls for the day when they would be set loose on the world.

What we might recognize is that...as it turns out...sometimes even adults forget to take time to nurture their inner spiritual life. We will find ways to stay busy, productive, distract or escape....but in these strange days . In our own 40-day+ time--Wilderness. Wandering. Waiting. Testing. And Listening. So what will we do with this time?

Psalm 90:12 says, “¹²So teach us, Lord, to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.”

Will we only just pass the time...or how can we make these days count?

People of God, we are a people of action! We will continue to find ways even in this time to reach out with loving kindness to help our neighbors and strangers. We will stay busy working and playing, filling our time with productivity and leisure.

But in these days, let's set aside some time for prayer and devotion. To grow in God's Wisdom and Spirit. To deepen our foundation in the grace of Jesus Christ. At some point (hopefully sooner rather than later) will be released back into the world. What will be different for us? How will we have nurtured that something within us which will reflect the heart of God? That we might be more prepared in Body and Spirit to be who God created us to be and to share the Good News of the Risen Christ here in our own Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth! May it be so. Amen.

HYMN - Christ is Risen! Shout Hosanna! #222

COMMUNION

Meditation and Prayer - Doug Rice
Words of Institution

CLOSING HYMN - He Lives #226***BENEDICTION - Chad**

May God, the one who rose Jesus from the dead, who is full of grace and truth...bless you in this time of waiting and wandering with spiritual wisdom and insight so you might deepen your relationship with God and love of neighbor.

May the Spirit fill you so that you might overflow with generosity, kindness, and love right where you are and beyond.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face to shine upon you now and always. Amen.

BENEDICTION SONG - Blest be the Tie that Binds - Beth Schabel