

Sunday, July 12, 2020
Hiram & Mantua Center Christian Churches
Remote Worship Order

Order of Worship

WELCOME

Welcome to Hiram Christian and Mantua Center Christian Church's online service.

- Bulletin
- Communion
- Rev. Chris McCreight is on Vacation. Keep his family in your prayers
- Pre-Recorded to Live
- Fellowship Time after the service to reflect and respond to the sermon and continue the discussion.
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- Let's begin...

PRE-RECORDED PART

PRELUDE

At the Name of Jesus, Arranged by Bruce Greer

Drew Hinkle

WELCOME & CALL to Worship - Sarah

Good morning church and welcome again to a joint worship service as Hiram Christian Church and Mantua Center Christian church have committed to coming together to be God's community for the duration of the summer. It is wonderful to be in worship with ALL of us this morning.

This week we will hear a message from the Rev. Chad Delaney, special music from Emliss Ricks (and our extraordinary music teams) as well as a Children's moment with Ally Hurd and communion meditation from Kristen Pool. You'll notice that Rev. Chris McCreight's name is missing from that list! Don't worry, we haven't booted him out (yet). He'll be on vacation for two weeks and back before you know it.

Beloved family of God, we now approach our time specifically set aside of worshipping with God this week. Let's all take a collective deep breath in, and then let it out. Light a candle if you are inclined, and hear now our call to worship from our sister denomination, the UCC:

*Come into the sanctuary and look around.
 Behold the beauty and splendor of God's people.*

*All of us – rich and poor, employed and unemployed
and desperately hanging on.
Behold the beauty and splendor of God's people.*

*We believe God's steadfast love is better than life,
so let our lips praise God as long as we live.
We also often doubt God's love.
We often doubt that God will really provide when it matters.*

*But this is what matters today:
God said, "Come all who are thirsty, come to the water,
and you that have no money, come, buy and eat."
All of us – rich and poor, employed and unemployed
and desperately hanging on.
So with faith – both bold and timid – let us worship God!*

OPENING PRAYER - Sarah Smith

*Our opening prayer this morning is adapted from a poem called Homecoming
written by lutherjulia on RevGalBlogPals*

Almighty one,

*Home is a place of rest.
Our home is in the Lord.*

*Home is a sense of peace.
Our home is in the Lord.*

*Home is a generous welcome.
Our home is in the Lord.*

*Home is refuge from fear.
Our home is in the Lord.*

*Home is an open table.
Our home is in the Lord.*

*Home is an end to eternal longing.
our home is in the Lord.*

*God of all places and people,
you are not bound by walls,
contained by addresses,
or limited by borders and barriers.*

*Open our eyes to see ourselves at home in you,
wherever we are and whatever our experiences.
Teach us to recognize our neighbors
as our fellow travelers and co-habitants,
alive together in You through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

HYMN - "Jesus, Name Above Names" (Sing and Rejoice Hymnal - Insert)

SCRIPTURE & SERMON - Chad (in the folder)

Isaiah 55:6-13

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹² For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. ¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

It was the year 1894 and there was a crisis hitting cities around the world. Horse Manure. Fast industrializing and fast-growing cities around the world were bustling with people and therefore they were bustling with horses. Those horses had single riders, they were pulling carts and coaches. They were the transportation system for keeping the city going socially and economically. BUT....They also stunk and left piles of stink all over the city. Horses produce about 15-35lbs of manure over the course of a day. So imagine what 100-200 THOUSAND horses just in New York City were dropping in the streets. The smell was awful. The flies were unbearable.

2.5 million pounds of manure In the winter time made for a mucky, slushy mess. In summer, it would dry out and blow about the city. Are you grossed out yet? And people were getting worried. Author Eric Morris writes, *"In 1894, the Times of London estimated that by 1950 every street in the city would be buried nine feet deep in horse manure. One New York prognosticator of the 1890s concluded that*

by 1930 the horse droppings would rise to Manhattan's third-story windows." It was such an enormous problem that they called it the Great Horse Manure Crisis of 1894. They even called a convention together to imagine some solutions...what were they going to do about this? Could horses eat something that would make their manure less stinky? Could they phase them out or limit the amount of them? What could be done? The convention was supposed to last 10 days, but only lasted three. They could only conclude that manure was their future.

But here's the thing, while they were lamenting over and fixated on the Horse manure problem, there were other folks dreaming up something new. They were Lenoir (Ienwar), Otto, Daimler, Benz, Ford, and Diesel--trying to figure out how to use an engine to power an everyday horse-less machine. The horse manure problem was solved in an expected way. It just took some dreamers. It took some ingenuity, creativity, vision, and a whole other set of questions to be asked. They had to get beyond the manure, get beyond what was... to see something completely different.

As we reflect on our passage today, we are reminded that one of the roles of the prophets in the history of God's people is to shake loose a new vision for the future. To inspire a life-giving word in the midst of the manure of life. The Prophet Isaiah was called to speak a word of hope in a dark and dangerous time.

Prof. Julianna Claasens of Stellenbosch, South Africa writes:

The trauma of the Babylonian Exile they had lived through was too much to bear. After seeing their beloved city destroyed; families torn apart; houses demolished; their country lost, it was not surprising that members of the prophet's audience were not so sure anymore whether they still believed in the God of their ancestors.

Exile, Diaspora, and Estrangement destroying the fabric of all that was familiar and sacred to them.

There were thorns and briers everywhere tearing at them.

The thorn of Empire had crushed them.

The brier of unfaithfulness and idolatry haunted them.

The thorn of violence against the poor and most vulnerable was amongst them

The brier of grief and despair was laid out like a blanket upon them.

You can imagine why many by that point had already given into despair, believing that this was their lot in life--their fields, hearts, lives would be covered in thorns and briers. They couldn't imagine something new and also realized that what was could never be again. So where do we go from here?

Now, together most of us here cannot relate to the horror and trauma of the Babylonian Exile, but we've witnessed and experienced estrangement, idolatry, and pain. Where there is unfaithfulness, grief, and hatred in so many different ways. Where there is plenty of thorns and briers and manure to go around. And sometimes we might feel abandoned or stuck, frustrated and despairing...we still have choices. Will the people of God today, will the Church today bunker down and wait out the downward spiral? Will we gather together to nostalgically pine for what was and could never be again? Will we navigate this present moment by cutting pathways through the manure pile and just try to survive? As we go through this time of COVID and when we see ourselves on the other side of it...what do we want to say about ourselves and our church? Will we be the group who gathered for

the convention and gave up--resigned to what has always been and try returning to what was....or are we the people dreaming up something new? Are we going to ask new questions and see something different?

When you imagine the church of the future, our country of the future, our world of the future...maybe even your family of the future---what would make the *“the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”*¹³ *Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle”*----When you dream what do you see? What needs to be changed or torn down? What do we need to keep and hold on to? What do we need to leave behind in our churches, in our nation, in our world so that each child of God and every corner of Creation can shout for Joy? Will we have enough courage, creativity, and vision to dream up, lift up and live it up into something new? To not settle for anything less than what God intended for the Creation to be! When the time comes to not just “return” but to return anew?

Isaiah the prophet and dreamer steps into the gap in that time and place...proclaiming God's faithfulness. Holding up a vision of what could be! So bold as to imagine that reality as they knew it could be different. Reminding all of us that God of Abraham and Sarah, Rebekah and Isaac...is not through with us yet. God's word is Alive and Well, working and living and moving in the world.... The rain and snow already watering the seeds of redemption sown amongst the thorns and briars and manure in the world. Can the church stand in the gap today and proclaim those gifts? May the God of Grace, Justice, and Peace everlasting....make those seeds grow within you and all of us so that we might return transformed and anew. May it be so. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC - Emliss Bob Dylan Forever Young

Video Ends, ZOOM Live Begins

TRANSITION

Chad: *May God add blessing to the hearing of the word in music. Thank you Emliss. Now, as we turn over to the live parts of the service we want to invite the children to get ready for the Children's Moment with Ally Hurd!*

CHILDREN'S MOMENT - Ally Hurd *(sent by email and in folder)*

COMMUNAL PRAYER - Chad *(in the folder)*

As we come together for this time of prayer I want to begin with a prayer written by Arianne Braithwaite Lehn in her book *Ash & Starlight* called *“When I need to see the beauty before me”*:

Creator God,

You make everything beautiful in its time. Please open my soul, Awakening One, to the surprising beauty (and timing) of this season. I need you to draw me in from my distraction. I want to witness your brightness in the greening earth and birds' song as well as the neighbor walking past or the child's sidewalk chalk. I want to pause in awe at the burning bushes in my friend's

well-timed email or the stranger's unexpected kindness...

The line in my book that awakens my soul or the masterful frost pattern on my kitchen window. I want to journey through this day with an awareness bringing gratitude and celebration--fresh hope in what you're creating and new eyes for the treasure buried beneath me. You promise that birth and death, planting and harvest, embrace and solitude all have their place in this world and my life. A beautiful faith allows things to unfold, and grabs onto the grace of daily glimpses. Loving God, I rest in you and your working to make all things beautiful--someday, somehow. You are the One who showed true beauty in human life. Amen

Gracious God, we invite you into our lives during this season of uncertainty. By the power of your Holy Spirit move us from the struggles of this present moment to see what newness you are springing forth. Help us to see a new way. Help us to look within and to you to repent of what needs repenting of and nurturing the gifts of love, mercy, and justice you have planted within us, our churches, our community. Guide us and lead us in your Spirit.

As we gather together as your beloved community we are filled with gratitude for the many gifts you have given us. And we pray your blessing upon those which are seen and those that remain unseen. We give all to you and lift to you our worries and fears, our joys and celebrations in silent prayer....

CUE: GET 1 - DOXOLOGY READY

DOXOLOGY - "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" #46 - Adam

HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion - Kristen Pool

CUE: 3 -

Communion Hymn - "The Gift of Love" #526 (Chalice Hymnal) by Hal H. Hopson

Communal Prayer & the Lord's Prayer - Kristen Pool

Words of Institution - Sarah

Sharing Communion Together

BENEDICTION - Chad (in the folder)

Family of God, it has been a joy to be in worship with you today. May your mind, heart, and spirit burst into song and visions of God's justice and peace.

Listen to this quote by author Sarah Bessey:

“Hope is subversive precisely because it dares to admit that all is not as it should be. And so we are holding out for, working for, creating, prophesying, and living into something better — for the kingdom to come, for oaks of righteousness to tower, for leaves to blossom for the healing of the nations, for swords to be beaten into plowshares, for joy to come in the morning, and for redemption and justice.”

The God of Love surround you, the Holy Spirit keep you, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ sustain you now and forevermore. Amen.

CUE: 4 -

HYMN - Sydney Sydney 395 Seed, Scatter and Sown verse 2

CUE: 5 -

POSTLUDE - Drew. What a Friend We Have in Jesus, Gail Hazard, inspired by the text by Joseph Scrivener [What A Friend, Lorenze Pub. NIne Reflections...Hazard]