

**Sunday, July 5, 2020**  
**Hiram & Mantua Center Christian Churches**  
**Remote Worship Order**

**Order of Worship**

**WELCOME**

*Welcome to our first online joint summer worship service.*

- *If you want to make sure you have communion ready, we will be partaking together later in the Zoom portion.*
- *We have a pre-recorded start to the service and then we will come back together for our live portions.*
- *After the service there's going to be a Fellowship Time and a time to reflect and respond on the sermon and continue the discussion today. Hang around after the service is over.*
- *Let's begin...*

**PRE-RECORDED PART**

**PRELUDE**      *Nearer to the Heart of God*      *Drew Hinkle*  
*by Cleland McAfee, Arr. Don Phillips*

**WELCOME & CALL to Worship - Chad**

*Chad: Good Morning Church!*

*Chris: Good Morning Church!*

*Sarah: Good Morning Church!*

*Chad: The Grace and Peace*

*Chris: of our Lord Jesus Christ*

*Sarah: be with you.*

*Chad: We are the Mantua*

*Sarah: Center Christian Church*

*Chris: and the Hiram Christian Church*

*Chris: We are a community of people who seek to find wholeness and participate in Christ's ministry of mending, healing, and reconciling the world all through the way of love.*

*Sarah: We are a community seeking to have Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Arms to live and love in the likeness of Jesus Christ. (feel free to edit that end part)*

*Chad: Remember we gather not as perfect people, but as people perfectly loved...all of us on a journey to be the people Christ calls us to be.*

*Chris: I'm Rev. Chris McCreight, and I serve the Hiram Christian Church*

*Sarah: I'm Pastor Sarah Smith and I serve the Mantua Center Christian Church*

*Chad: And I'm Rev. Chad Delaney and I serve the Mantua Center Christian Church. We will be led in music by our wonderful combined music team of Drew Hinkle, Sydney Shawgo, and Adam Petrosino.*

*It's true! For July and August, Hiram Christian Church and the Mantua Christian Church are coming together to join in worship. We will be combining our offerings of preaching, music, prayer, and communion to share the Gospel and embrace our common call as Christ's family in our little corner of God's world. I do want to extend a special welcome to Hudson Western Reserve Christian Church and the members there. Their pastor--Rev. Jeff Jackson is on vacation and is joining us today...Welcome! Welcome to worship from wherever you are!*

*Today in worship we will be drawn to the book of Matthew to dive into Jesus' words about his burden being light. What challenge and call might we hear from this powerful scripture today?*

*So family of God, let's take a deep breath. Prepare our hearts, minds, and spirits to listen a little deeper and be open to how the Spirit might be moving today.*

*Let's begin worship by listening to the praise-filled words of the Psalmist---in Psalm 145:8-11 - Listen, Listen, Listen...*

*The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

*The LORD is good to all, and the Lord's compassion is over all the Lord has made. All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful*

*shall bless you. They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power,*

*Let's worship the Lord...*

***OPENING PRAYER - Sarah Smith***

People of God, as we enter into a time of communal prayer, I invite you to assume a comfortable praying position. Notice points of tension in your body. Are you sitting up too straight or slouched? Are your feet pinched under your body or flat on the floor? Take a moment to readjust, rolling your shoulders away from your ears, unclenching the muscles of your jaw, and relaxing into this conversation with the divine. Take a deep breath in.... Then let it out...,

Liberating and sustaining God, your community calls you to be one with us in this place for this moment for today. As we come together we recognize the thread of divinity that ties us to you, but also joins us together as your children. How often have we tried to cut these ties due to pain and fear and individualism? Show us in your grace and mercy how we can honor our points of connection and heal the pain that separation from you and each other brings.

Almighty, there are ways of this world that are different from the Kingdom that you invited us into. From our first breath, we are taught these ways whether we realize it then or not. Unlearning is as hard of work as learning, and even more painful and scary. Just as you have promised to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, we ask for you to also become the hard hat and chisel that we wield as we go through a process of chiseling away what we know until we can find your teachings again. We know that in this knowledge, we find justice. We know that with justice comes peace. May it be so with your people.

Amen.

***HYMN - Be Thou My Vision - Adam***

***SCRIPTURE & SERMON - Chris***

**The Light Burden**

**Matthew 11.16-19, 25-30**

**July 5, 2020**

Two oxen are approaching one another on the road.

The first ox is yoked to a new light-weight wagon carrying a few bales of hay, nothing much for an ox.

The second is yoked to a wagon carrying iron ore.  
The wagon has a busted wheel,  
and the wagon has another hitch on the back that is connected to a plow...  
and the plow is broken,  
and is dragging on the road tilling up the pressed earth as it goes.

The first ox walks close to the second and says:  
*"That yoke is too much of a burden for you;  
Too much for any ox to carry,  
Let me call my master and we will help remove that from you; and give you something lighter."*

The second ox is incensed and snorts in disgust.  
*"Please! All I have is a yoke!  
My master puts it on every day,  
Adds these blinders,  
And off we go."*

*Look at you,  
Your yoke is attached to a wagon;  
Hauling hay,  
You haul your coffin."*

And off, they went.

The idea of a yoke and burden,  
However light -  
Appears as death to those who believe their yoke is free from  
- and unattached to -  
any burden whatsoever.

Our scripture from the Gospel According to Matthew holds beloved words of the comfort, tenderness, and the grace of Christ,  
*'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'*

To the children of God who have been burdened by and excluded from the community because of a condition, an identity, or a history;  
To the children of God who cannot but help to see and feel the weight of the yoke placed upon them by the dominant culture and sanctioned by the religious tradition,

To the children of God who thought one yoke would bring them wealth, power, and greatness, and are exhausted by what they carry...  
This is liberation.

Christ removes the yokes of ideologies and narratives that elevate some at the expense of the many;

Christ removes the yokes of stigma around non-normative identities and cultures;

Christ removes the yokes that hold out a carrot in front of us, pushing and exhausting ourselves to reach it, but we never do.

Christ removes these and every yoke that is weighing one down and holding one back and exhausting one to the point when they are gasping for air;

Gasping for life.

Christ removes the yoke,

And replaces it with new, easy yoke that holds rest for the soul;

Whose only burden is to faithfully respond to the question,

*What does love require of me?*

Christ is liberator,

And Christ is an honest broker;

Notice that Jesus does not tell the people that they should give up their yoke and trade it in to follow Christ in discipleship and the co-creation of the Kingdom of God because it is free - and without cost and without requirement.

Christ does not neglect the truth in this;

There is the burden of love that is a part of this connection to Christ.

Christ is honest and up front with us about this.

Christ is not like some used car salesman who will say anything to get you to buy in... who will contact you after you make an inquiry about trading in your car,

Who will tell you that this is the kelly blue book value of the car, and this is the offer, but perhaps if you bring in the car you can get even more,

Who, when you tell him that you have a better offer does not decline, but persists and says,

*"We often beat other offers."*

Who will then schedule an appointment and when you arrive, hand you off to another salesman who is not interested,

who will call another uninterested salesman to check the car,

And who will then look it over,  
 Type feverishly into a computer,  
 look at a phone,  
 and then provide the final offer for the car that is *actually less than* the original offer  
 they told you was the just the beginning offer over the phone!

No, Christ is not some dishonest salesman promising us one thing and delivering  
 another...

And no, I won't get those hours back,  
 And this is a point about what else is within this text.

Because Christ speaks the truth and acknowledges that we're all yoked to something -  
 And because Christ conveys the cost of discipleship - of taking Christ's yoke.

There is rejection to the invitation from so many,  
 Christ's tone throughout this story is grief and lament - and we gather that the invitation  
 is not often accepted.

This is understandable

Because... so many yokes are placed around us as soon as we are born -  
 We emerge from the womb and slide right into yokes our culture and family have  
 prepared for us.

We've never known anything else.  
 And they've never known anything else.

I think of the yokes of racism and patriarchy that are standard issue within our culture.

Rejection to the invitation is understandable  
 Because... so many yokes have been sold to us with the promise that there is no  
 weight;  
 there is no burden;  
 it is only benefit;  
 And look, they threw in the blinders for free.

I think of the yokes of materialism, militarism, and nationalism...

These yokes that have harnessed our bodies and imagination,  
 That are wielding our direction and reaping our energy;  
 That are exhausting ourselves and harming others...

These yokes are insidious and deceptive...

And the good news is that they can be loosed, and exchanged.

*'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'*

We are all yoked to something...  
 Something we immerse our bodies into;  
     And carry around;  
 Something that shapes the direction we head towards,  
     And the earth as we proceed;

And so, if this is news to you...  
 There may be invitation to pause and begin to sense what is this thing that is  
 harnessed around you...  
     And is it worthy of your divine dignity and the beauty of the world?

If you know well the yoke to which you are bound but you remember the deal that was  
 made and how it promised only gain and there was no cost at all...  
 There may be invitation to pause, remove the blinders, and turn around to see what it is  
 that you've been sold and what it is that you've already paid.

And if you've known well the yoke and you've known the burden and you've known just  
 how exhausted you are and how it has exhausted the earth, but have been thinking  
 that's all there is...

    There is invitation - the yoke can come off.  
     And if you need some help in removing that yoke,  
         And extracting yourself from it,  
 You've got some siblings in the Church who are more than willing to support you and  
 assist you in loosening that yoke, tending to the wounds, and easing into the yoke of  
 Christ.

Christ sees the struggle of God's beloved children and invites us out from the yokes  
 that are unworthy and into a way that brings healing to us and the world.

May we as the Church extend Christ's invitation to all of God's beloved children:

May we speak and remind the world that there are other ways of living - other yokes to  
 bind ourselves to - that are life-giving and salvific, and one of them is Christ.

May we be a community that is filled with honesty and compassion - holding up a  
 mirror to ourselves and to our siblings to allow us to sense what we may not have  
 understood, and allowing the community of Christ to aid in the exchange and  
 transformation.

And may we all find rest, grace, love, joy, and goodness in binding ourselves to Christ,  
 and in this common journey.

Amen.

***SPECIAL MUSIC - Lydia Snyder (in the folder)***

***Video Ends, ZOOM Live Begins***

---

**TRANSITION**

***Chad:*** *May God add blessing to the hearing of the word in music. Thank you Lydia. 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**

**COMMUNAL PRAYER - Sarah Smith**

*CUE: GET 1 - DOXOLOGY READY*

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

*CUE: GET 2 - Nora's Communion Meditation Ready*

**HOLY COMMUNION**

**Invitation to Communion - Nora Brant**

*CUE: 3 - Spirit of the Living God*

**Communion Hymn - "Spirit of the Living God" #259**

**Prayers of the People & Lord's Prayer - Nora Brant**

**Words of Institution - Chad**

***Sharing Communion Together***

**BENEDICTION - Chris**

*CUE: 4 - Comfort, Comfort....*

**HYMN - Sydney 122 Comfort Comfort, ye my people (verse 1 only)**

*CUE: 5 - Nearer My God to Thee*

**POSTLUDE - "Nearer My God to Thee" Drew Hinkle**