

Sunday, August 23, 2020
Hiram & Mantua Center Christian Churches
Remote Worship Order

Order of Worship

Sunday Zoom WELCOME - Chad

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

- Logistics
 - Bulletin
 - Communion
- Announcements
 - Our Anti-Racism Study is continuing on Wednesdays as well as our Wednesday afternoon Prayer Time at 2:00
- Fellowship Time after the service to reflect and respond to the sermon and continue the discussion.

PRE-RECORDED PART

PRELUDE - Drew Hinkle - Gott der Vater wohn' uns bei, "God the Father lives with us", Johannes Pachelbel

WELCOME & CALL to Worship - Rev. Chad Delaney

This is the Day that the Lord has made...let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Welcome to our Joint Worship of the Hiram Christian and Mantua Center Christian Churches. Together we gather to listen, listen, listen for a word from God in music, in preaching, in prayer, in silence...always trusting God is speaking, creating, revealing something new.

Today we will hear from three magnificent young leaders in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Sarah Smith who is the student pastor at MCCC and going to Lexington Theological Seminary. Isaac Ackerman who Xplor-ed with us and is now heading to Vanderbilt Divinity School (my alma mater!). And Val Bejar who also Xplor-ed with us and is now the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Immigration Response Specialist. Together they will reflect on Matthew 16:13-20 and invite the question, "Who is the Christ?" in this time and place.

So however it works best for you, let's get our minds, hearts, and spirits ready for

worship and to listen closely for what the Holy Spirit has to teach us this morning.

OPENING PRAYER - Rev. Chad Delaney

God of Love and Life, open our hearts and spirits to your Good News this morning. Help us so to hear your word that we might understand, in our understanding give us faith, and in our faith to live and follow the way of your son, Jesus Christ. In his name we pray, Amen.

HYMN - For the Beauty of the Earth #56 (Chalice Hymnal) v. 1, 3 and 4 by Folliott Sandford Pierpoint

SCRIPTURE & SERMON - Val, Sarah, and Isaac

Welcome Friends! New and old! I am overjoyed to be using the magic of the internet to join you wherever you may be. I am Isaac Ackerman He/Him They/Them, an XPLORer from 2018 to 2019 and a 2020 Netflix enthusiast. Today you are lucky enough to have two amazing women bring a prophetic word but first you have to listen to me. I have the honor of being a type of John the Baptist. Who at the beginning of the book of Matthew says, “But after me will come one (or two) who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry.” How lucky are we to be joined by Valeria Bejar, and Sarah Smith today.

It’s during XPLOR that the three of us got to meet and ask “what does it look like to live in beloved community?” We were lucky to all have many teachers in our journey and the companionship of Linda Idoine. Ultimately our time in XPLOR taught us to ask questions that we often knew would not have simple answers? Questions that would not be answered quickly or maybe would never have an answer. But the importance of these questions were not in their answers but in how they asked us to think and act. Today we are going to engage with some questions that to some of us might feel older than dirt, but I’m going to ask all of us to do some work. I want all of us to put some energy into seeing these questions anew, so . . .

Let us prepare for our minds, our hearts, and our arms to see a Jesus and a Church in new ways. Ways that ask us to love deeper, hope more profoundly, and spread joy with abandon. New ways that open our ears and eyes to calls for justice, open our hearts to show mercy to the least of these, and open our hands to do the work of the church in 2020. So let’s dive in. . .

Today’s two big questions that are posited from our text are “Who is Jesus?” and

“What is the Church?” While we meditate on these questions let us not get lost in having the exact answer. This is not $2+2=4$ but a very different set of questions that should come with a different approach. We might jump through some historical hoops to give context to these questions, but at the end of the day, these are questions to live into.

I hope your familiar with Mrs. Frizzle from Magic School Bus. She is a wild and wonderful woman that maybe got close to constructing a life around the question what is $2+2$ She would take her students on wild and wacky journeys around the entire universe and it seemed like her entire life centered around questions about science and math. I imagine that if her students saw her outside the classroom they might not have that paralyzing fear of realizing your teacher is not only a teacher but also someone that shops at a grocery store. I imagine Mrs. Frizzle rocking a dress with mathematical equations and educating anyone who would listen on the fruits and vegetables they were buying and telling them mind blowing ideas about what was going to happen to the food as it travels through our digestive tract. I think students that bumped into her doing that would say, “Yup, that’s Mrs. Frizzle.”

I wonder what it would look like for us to live into the questions about Jesus and the church that would cause us to act similarly to Mrs. Frizzle. What would it look like for us to live into these questions outside of the walls of our church and into our communities in the ways I imagine Mrs. Frizzle lives into math and science questions.

Obviously this isn’t a perfect analogy, and not many of us are able to get paid to construct a life around the things we see as important in our society. Some of us are just doing what we gotta do to survive before we can ask ourselves, “what we can do to thrive and to help others thrive and flourish?”

As we explore these questions, the call today is not for you to be overtly “religious” because Jesus has some fighting words with the religious people of his time and I’d like to think a 2020 Jesus would have some big disagreements with the religious folks of today. But I hope that the message you hear causes you to think and act in the wise words of Mrs. Frizzle, “Take chances, make mistakes, get messy.”

Is this how I share it?

Many thanks to Isaac, who is dearly beloved to me and many others, and who

brings life and light to every discussion I have ever witnessed him in. I am blessed to know and work with such wonderful folks and hope that, serving as a version of Ms. Frizzle today, I can do his praise justice.

Like Miss Frizzle's class, in order for us to know Jesus, we need to take a step into the unknown and immerse ourselves in the life of the one who leads us. We are taught from a young age that the perfect model for us is Jesus. But who was Jesus? Who is Jesus now? How will we see Jesus in the future?

For God so loved the world that she became enfleshed, she stepped into a human body to come and be in relationship with us. For a short time, the divine walked among us - able to bleed, able to laugh, able to cry in the form that we know as Jesus. God had known human intimacy as the Creator, but it is intimate on a whole other level to be able to become her own creation. The life of Jesus was a delicate balance of divinity and humanity, teaching us the importance of recognizing this balance in ourselves and the folks around us. And all this was just from conception!

In the first few years of Jesus's life, he was a refugee, on the run from a genocidal tyrant who demanded the death of children like Jesus. He was born to a single mother and a step-father of humble means. To move this often as a result of being on the run would likely have meant that Jesus grew up impoverished, as carpentry, while a useful skill, requires customers who are familiar with your work to hire you. Perhaps this is why Jesus never condemned the poor and struggling, and surrounded himself with intentional community. Perhaps this is why Jesus spread a message of interconnectedness and communal ties through the Spirit of Divine Love.

We know very little of Jesus's early childhood. What we do know is that Jesus came of age following his cousin, John the Baptist, a radical preacher and prophetic voice in his own right. And like many young revolutionaries, John was unafraid to get into a little trouble to get his message across. This "Good Trouble" as Rev. Chris preached a few weeks ago, would lead to his death by the state, ultimately paralleling Jesus's fate. Is it any wonder then, that Jesus would preach a message of creating trouble in the name of caring for the least of these, the poor, the sick, the societal outcasts?

It is interesting in this passage that Jesus asks his disciples, "who do you say I am?" This group that traveled with him - listening to his teaching, witnessing

miracles, sharing life and laughter and tears - these were Jesus's family of choice, his beloveds. When they point out his divinity, Jesus mixes humor and sincerity into a metaphor for the church - the word Jesus used for Peter is *eben*, which is closer to a pebble than a rock, but the word *ebeneh* that Jesus uses for build is the combining of many pebbles to make a bedrock. Jesus is essentially saying that the revelation of the divinity within his humanity is the foundation upon which he will build the kingdom and each person who witnesses this revelation becomes a part of that building process. He gives the disciples the "keys to the kingdom", but it is up to them to build the kingdom themselves.

Jesus does not ask his disciples to worship him as if he was God, Jesus asks them to follow his teachings and let others recognize the divinity within those actions. The life of Jesus was messy, complicated by all the little idiosyncrasies that make humans ... human. But in this lifetime, in this humanity, in this enfleshed divinity, God gave us the gift of her wisdom. God showed us how to love each other and to love God by saying, come - watch and learn. God experienced human suffering and promised us that there was peace and love to be found within the midst of our messy lives. God affirmed through the life of Jesus that she meant what she said when she looked upon creation and said "it is Good" and then revealed to us how to see it. So what do we do with this example? How do we be the church - the bedrock - in the world today?

Isaac, Sarah... Why am I the one that supposed to wrap everything up and attempt to top y'all? (insert awkward laughs...Hopefully) Thank you both for your words, your wisdom, and your gracious way of challenging and questioning the topics at hand. Now church... How do we be the church in today's world?

I will start with a Mexican saying that my parents would tell me all the time as I was growing up, "Tell me who you're with, and I'll tell you who you are."

My parents would drop this on me all the time, especially when I would invite a new friend to come over to our home, that they perceived was or wasn't a good influence. They would assume that if I was going to build a relationship with friends that had certain habits, dressed a specific way, did certain things, etc. then i would most likely become like them or adapt to their way of being and take it as my own. This saying always made me think twice about what friendship groups i would join, who i would sit with during lunch and even who I would call my close friends, because i knew that whoever I built relationships with would reflect certain things about me as an individual. Now, bare with me... As Sarah

shared who Jesus was and what he expected of those who would follow him, I simply kept coming back to this saying and I started thinking, we must first KNOW and HAVE a relationship with Jesus and Divine to then be able know who we are as the church.

“Tell me who you’re with, and I’ll tell you who you are.”

Everyone knew who the Disciples were because they walked with Jesus. People knew who the Disciples were because of WHO they were with. Jesus walked with, healed, taught, encouraged, loved, provided for, stood for, fought for the Refugees, the immigrants, the oppressed, the marginalized, the poor, the outcasts. And where were the Disciples, (most of the time, and never complaining) They were with Jesus.

“Tell me who you’re with, and I’ll tell you who you are.”

And “Who do you say that I am?”

I think and would like to imagine that if biblical Jesus was right here right now he would be found at a BLM protest, chanting against concentration camps, participating in PRIDE month, and maybe doing a lot of things that some of us “Modern day Christians” would be baffled by. Jesus would be an immigrant who is being targeted by harmful immigration policy, Jesus would be a potential victim of police brutality, Jesus would be a part of every community who is being oppressed and persecuted in our modern day.

“Tell me who you’re with, and I’ll tell you who you are.”

The Disciples walked along and journeyed with Jesus, they were the church. Each one of them recognized the temple within them. In these times when we aren’t being church in the way we’re used to, with many of us not being able to congregate and be in community in a physical space. I would like to challenge and push for us to recognize the temple within us. We know who we’re with, so what does that say about who we are and where we’re going?

As Isaac mentioned, this isn’t $2+2=4$ this is a call to re-think, re-learn, re-evaluate, re-envision

Who we’re with, who we are, and where we’re going.

SPECIAL MUSIC - Jan Green “Praise Him” Arr. Mary McDonald

Video Ends, ZOOM Live Begins

Zoom TRANSITION

Chris or Chad: *May God add blessing to the hearing of the word in music.
Thank you Jan Green. 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.*

CHILDREN'S MOMENT - Ally Hurd

Prayers of the People - Rev. Chad Delaney

*****What prayer requests would you like to share this morning?**

A prayer by Rev. Terri Peterson

In this prayer there is a response. In the "pauses" say:

May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

Prayers of the People

For all the blessings of this life, we give thanks to You, Creator God.

For families, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and strangers,
who nurture us, that your love may grow within.

That Your love, your Word, like a seed, may grow to produce in us, good fruit.

May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

For the leaders of various nations and cities,

that they may lead with strong hearts and gentle hands and generous spirits,
with compassion and mercy, with wisdom and grace.

May they reflect your will guiding all their actions and decisions.

May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

For those who serve in harms way, those who live in dangerous places,

those who live in areas of war and strife, those who live in fear,

those who worry about employment, bills, food,
and struggle just to find dignity in life.

May your grace bring peace and safety to all people, one to another.

May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

For those who suffer from any illness or dis-ease—of mind, body, or spirit.

Restore these, and all those we carry in our hearts, to fullness of health—
health as only you, O God, can bring.
May your mercy shower each of us with healing mercy and love.

May your love be like a seed, taking root and growing strong.

For those who are dying, and for those who have died.
Send forth your comforting love.
Give solace to those who mourn. Console those who grieve.
May your grace surround us like a mantle upon our heads,
a shawl upon our shoulders, a hand, to hold our hand.

May your love, be like a seed, taking root and growing strong. Amen

God, in this season we also want to thank you for the generosity of your church. Inspire within us a desire to reach out and share with others. Amen.

DOXOLOGY

HOLY COMMUNION

Communion Hymn - "Break Thou the Bread of Life" #321 (Chalice Hymnal) by
Mary A. Lathbury and Alexander Groves

Meditation - Tim Bennett

Communal Prayer & the Lord's Prayer - Tim Bennett

Words of Institution - Tim Bennett

Sharing Communion Together

BENEDICTION - Chad

Church Families, it has been a blessing to be with you in worship today. If you are so inclined please visit our websites to see how you might support and participate in our church ministry. We are the Christian Church Disciples of Christ -- A movement for wholeness in a Fragmented world. Let's continue to work for Joy and Justice and Love in all we say and do.

As we close, let's hear this wonderful quote by Thomas Merton

You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope. In such an event, courage is the authentic form taken by love.

Tell me who you're with and I'll tell you who you are. Let's stand together. Let's work in solidarity with those who are hurting. May each of us and as the church together find ways to live out that authentic form of faith, hope, and love of the Gospel in the name of Jesus Christ! Amen.

HYMN - Postlude - Pastoral, Dennis Elliot {LorenzePub, OP#??}