

Lakewood Congregational Church,

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Sunday, May 10, 2020

An Order of Worship to be followed in your home,
along with our worship video or on your own
Preferably at 10:00 a.m.



Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to worship on the 5th Sunday of Easter. We are glad you're worshipping with us today. Please know that no matter who you are and where you are in life's journey you are welcome and embraced among us to worship a loving God who welcomes us all.

When you begin your in-home worship service, pause to center yourself and then hold your palms towards the computer screen or to your heart and imagine the energy of connection. Think of many of the people you love at Lakewood Congregational Church and the Body of Christ throughout the world, and feel the ways in which our hearts connected to yours.

Say, "May the Peace of Christ be with you."

- Please join us on Facebook at Lakewood Congregational Church at **11:00 on Sunday morning** for Facebook Live Coffee Hour.

Offering and Contribution Collection

Please consider fulfilling your pledges during this time. Financial gifts are always welcome, and our church feels the call to respond to the needs around us as they arise. Financial stability allows us to do so more effectively. So, let us give generously of our time, talent, treasure to further the work of God in our community.

You can do so in the following ways:

- Writing and mailing a check to Lakewood Congregational Church, 1375 W. Clifton Blvd. Lakewood, Ohio 44107
- Texting STEWARD to 44-321
- Sending a gift through your bank's online bill pay
- By using the donate button on the church's website www.lcc-church.org
- Call the church office at (216) 221-9555 to discuss other options

Let us worship God.

Prelude

Coat of Many Colors by Dolly Parton
LCC Youth Singers, Noah Hamrick, director

Soloists (in order)

Avery & Penny Spahr

Anneliese Hampton

Lilly Burns

Thomas Tamilio

Elizabeth Schuldt

Olivia, Amelia, & Peyton Diemert

Audrey Warren

Evelyn Lardi

Ruby Fraunfelder

Evelyn & Grant Richards

Evelyn & Amos D'Agostino

Teegan Barlow

Chorus Members

David Burns

Amos D'Agostino

Evelyn D'Agostino

Anna Daso

Will Schuldt

Invocation

Divine Architect, as we abide in our homes, we wonder what will come next. We grieve what we have left behind, and we mourn the life we are no longer living. Fill us with a new Spirit, that we can vision a future filled with joy. May we spend this time rejoicing in the power of Divine Hope, knowing that your presence is forever with us, God. Amen.

Hymn

My Hope Is Built

Sung by LCC's Virtual Choir: Naomi Columna, Tim Hampton, Noah Hamrick, Michael Komperda, Liz Spahr, Robert Wenz; Ben Malkevitch, piano

1. My hope is built on noth - ing less than
2. When dark - ness veils his love - ly face, I
3. His oath, his cov - e - nant, his blood sup -
4. When he shall come with trum - pet sound, O

Je - sus' blood and righ - teous - ness. I dare not trust the
rest on his un - chang - ing grace. In ev - ery high and
port me in the whelm - ing flood. When all a - round my
may I then in him be found! Dressed in his righ - teous -

sweet - est frame, but whol - ly lean on Je - sus' name.
storm - y gale, my an - chor holds with - in the veil.
soul gives way, he then is all my hope and stay.
ness a - lone, fault - less to stand be - fore the throne!

Refrain
On Christ the sol - id rock I stand, all oth - er ground is
sink - ing sand; all oth - er ground is sink - ing sand.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a treble and bass clef with a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are arranged in four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The first system includes four numbered verses. The second system continues the lyrics. The third system concludes the main body of the hymn. The fourth system is the refrain, which repeats twice. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and simple melodic lines.

Pastoral Prayer

Be with us through all the unknown days lying before us:
days when even the weather is unknown,
and yet every day feels like the day before,
days when the headlines seem to emerge from the worst dystopian story
but we remind ourselves again that we are not alone,
days when we are consumed with worry
for the vulnerable, the poor and the sick
but we do not know what to do with our own troubled hearts.

Be with us in this unknown, O God.
Do not put us to shame.
Be our refuge and strength.
so that we grow in union with all our siblings,
so that we may see more deeply into ourselves.

Be with us in this unknown, O God.
Show your full self to us
and allow us to see ourselves in you.
Resist the temptation to show great works
but remind us where you dwell.

Show us your heartbeat.
Let us feel your breath
as close as our own.

Help us to find the faith to believe:
I am in you and you are in me.
Help us understand that in your refuge
life is not ended but only changed.

Help us join together with your whole creation to say:
Great and powerful is our God.
God fills heaven and earth with love and beauty.
It is a beauty we see in doctors, nurses,
chaplains, teachers, grocery workers and delivery workers.
It is love that we see smiling in the eyes
above each face mask.

Even in the unknown, O God,
we believe in you.
Help us to believe in each other
and even in ourselves.
In Christ's name we pray the Prayer our Savior taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

Offering

Even in this season of the unknown, God is caring for us. And we are called to give what we have to care for our church, our community, and our world. We are nudged to give what we can to share the Good News of God's unconditional and steadfast love for each of us.

In a spirit of thanksgiving, we pray together-

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, Divine Architect, in your presence we find a peaceful refuge. In your presence, we are called to keep your commandments to love our neighbor as ourselves. Give us the courage and strength to carry your light into our communities and world with the talents, time, and treasures you have bestowed upon us. We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, our Compass in unsure times, Amen.

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Message

**** We've included this transcript, word-for-word, for the benefit of people who do not have audio access on their computer. Please keep in mind that it is written in the way it's spoken, so the grammar/sentence structure may feel a bit awkward to read. Even so, this feels like the best way to communicate to as many people as possible.*

Prayer: God may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, for you are our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

- I. Our Scripture Reading this week is from Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16, but I am going to read it throughout my message and you have also heard much of it already in the prayers this morning.
- II. I want to start my sermon today by reading a story. This, I suppose, in honor of Mother's Day. First of all in honor of my mom who was a preschool teacher, childcare director, who did in-home childcare, before and after school care in the City of Cleveland, and now does children's ministry. Reading stories together is one of the primary ways I came to understand mothering. I miss her today as we practice social distancing. I wish I could be with her. And so that's just a shoutout to my mom.
 - A. I'm also reading a story because I don't think I'm the only one who associates mothering with reading books. I think many of you, whether your mothers are still physically present with us or not, remember curling up in your mother's arms—your grandmother's arms— reading a story. And so perhaps hearing a story will bless your memory of a mothering person in your life.
 - B. I'm reading this book because it's called Home. Our scripture this week is about Refuge, about those places where we find safety, about finding safety in God's shelter. This is a book about many types of homes. The writing is nice but the art

is really where the beauty is. You might even consider pausing your screen to look at the details.

- C. I hope that for many reasons, the reading of this story will help you think of Home. Of refuge. Of gentle mothering compassion and care.

III. ::Read “Home” by Carson Ellis; a children’s book about various types of homes::

IV. Our Psalm this week begins: *In you, O God, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.*

- A. There was another time this year when I preached on the topic of Refuge. It was on January 4th when I was encouraging you to choose a Star Word for the year: an Epiphany word, a star with a driving word on it to follow to guide you in your faith journey throughout the year. It was actually the last time I read a children’s book to you. That book was called *Refuge*; a story about Joseph, Mary, and their baby Jesus and their flight as refugees to Egypt. On that Sunday, I got to the end of the book which ends, “they entered into Egypt and they found refuge.” and I closed the book and I said these words to you:

- B. “What does refuge look like for us on this phase of our journeys? Are we seeking refuge or are we seeking to be a place of refuge for others, or are we both? As I look at this final spread, this image of warmth and welcome and kindness, I feel provoked that perhaps our Star Word for the year, as a church, is refuge. To be a place where all people feel safe, and warm, and embraced.”

- C. I continued: “2020 will be a hard year for us... for our nation... for our world. What if we can promise to each other and to anyone outside of this place, that this is a sanctuary, a refuge, a haven in the storm. I can’t promise that it will be everybody’s definition of safe because the Gospel challenges us and makes us uncomfortable and we can’t pretend it doesn’t. What I hope to live into as a refuge for all people is the promise that we will have grace upon grace for one another and each person who enters these doors. That we will be willing to journey together and to support one another into becoming more fully who God created us to be. We can’t do that without refuge.”

V. I had no idea, of course, on January 4th, that we would have to so strongly shift our understanding of refuge this year. Psalm 31 continues: *You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name’s sake lead me and guide me, take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.*

- A. “Indeed” is such a sweet word; the confirmation of something we think we might believe, but indeed just kinda’ nails it down: Christ is Risen; Christ is Risen indeed. We need that affirmation now. We want to lament, “well we had a Rock and Refuge, but we can’t go there anymore. We’re not allowed to be there, is God still our Rock and our Refuge?” The Psalmist reassures us speaking to God: You are indeed my Rock and my Fortress. The Psalmist is on repeat: You are my refuge you are my refuge you are my refuge. A repeated covenant, a repeated reassurance. Indeed. Now and forever.

VI. I’m in a Facebook group with over 7,000 members across the globe called Spiritual and Communal Responses during Covid-19. It was originally for clergy and faith community

leaders but has slowly become more expansive over the past couple of months. I get a lot of resources and wisdom from that group every day.

- A. This week someone posted the question: Has anyone come up with a good name for the space we occupy when we gather online for worship? Holy ground doesn't sound quite right... God's house doesn't ring true either... Just wondered if anyone has put forth a new way of speaking about the space an online community occupies?
- B. Answers rolled in: People call it online church, spiritual gathering, Sacred Community... and so on. Good answers. I of course love the one many LCCers have adopted: "Virtch": Virtual Church, and I'll keep calling it that despite the point I'm about to make.
- C. But eventually someone responded to the question, "has anybody come up with a good name for the space we occupy now" with: "Church. Not to be snarky about it, but the more we qualify this experience with words like "cyber" or "online," the more we reinforce the idea that REAL church is only what happens when we're together, in the building, with a choir, etc. Meanwhile, this is the Church we are right now."
- D. That response was a bit of a lightbulb moment for me. This is the Church we are right now. And this is the refuge we are right now. This is the community we are right now. This is the Body of Christ we are right now. Separately in our own homes, we remain an organized force in the name of Jesus Christ. You are indeed my rock and my refuge.

VII. On January 4th I said: "I feel provoked that perhaps our Star Word for the year, as a church, is refuge. To be a place where all people feel safe, and warm, and embraced." Church you are indeed the rock and the refuge of so many people. I said, "2020 will be a hard year for us... for our nation... for our world." This-- what we're doing here, right now, the community we are building, is a sanctuary, a refuge, a haven in the storm. Even in our separate places, this community we have formed continues to be a place where all people are welcome, loved, and safe regardless of gender and sexuality, socioeconomic status and education level, age and race and physical and mental ability. We continue to be a welcoming, worshiping community of faith, helping people discover and deepen their relationship with God, growing as disciples of Christ and reaching out in faith and loving service. A refuge indeed.

VIII. I want to shift a little bit to reflect on a commentary on Psalm 31 written by Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggeman, one of the most influential Bible interpreters of our time and a huge force at my Seminary, Eden Seminary. He says that Psalm 31 serves as a theological lens for looking at time: Promethean and Covenantal Time. Promethean time is something to fill, master, control, and plan out with an aim of achievement, accomplishment, success, and perhaps money-making. He says that when we live in "Promethean time" it turns out that "sheltering" under house arrest is enormously frustrating, because it is hard to accomplish in liminal times, it's hard to achieve when we don't what we're competing for, it's hard to know what we need to gain next, and so we become restless. We are literally unable to rest. Raise your hand if you're having trouble sleeping these days.

- A. Brueggeman says that Psalm 31 calls us into Covenantal Time instead. I'll read verses 15 and 16 of our Psalm now: *Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have*

redeemed me, O God, O faithful God. My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

- B. Covenantal time is marked by many of the things I've preached about in these past few weeks: setting down your burdens, being at peace with what you're able to do today, and not worrying about tomorrow, reorienting yourself to the needs of others, and trusting in God's steadfastness.
 - C. Brueggeman says that "it is the task and glory of the church to inhabit and to bear witness to Covenantal time that frontally contradicts the Promethean time by which most of us reckon our days." *My times are in your hands.*
- IX. It is in the place of refuge: the Church, God's encompassing and steadfast love; it is in this time of refuge: of sheltering in place, that God is calling us to put our time in God's hands, so that God can call us, provoke us, move us, reorient us towards a better world: a world that is better for all people. For all people, for all people, for all people.
- X. When I look at the beautiful art in that book, I read to you earlier, when I see all those varying definitions of home... I think of how deeply we yearn for a time when every person has a safe and reliable and affirming refuge: when every person has a place to be fully ourselves as God created us to be, to be fully loved as God's beloved creation, made in the image of God, a place to be full receivers of grace and compassion. And so I pray that the time we spend in Covenantal time rather than Promethean time will reorient us towards a world that is a refuge for all who occupy it and not just for the strong and the wealthy and the powerful. But until then, Beloved, until then, we know that even when the world cannot offer that promise, God is indeed the Rock and the Refuge and the home for all of creation. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Benediction

As we dream of a future with hope,
We seek our refuge in God.
We find enduring comfort in the Holy Spirit.
We embrace the peace furnished by Jesus the Christ.
We will not let our hearts be troubled or afraid
as the steadfast presence of the Divine is in our midst
giving us the vision to look ahead to the future with love and hope.

Postlude

Gigue by Bach
Tamara Reik, violin