

Lakewood Congregational Church,

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Sunday, May 3, 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

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 feel their hearts connected to yours.

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

Today's service includes a service of Holy Communion, as is custom for LCC on the first Sunday of every month. Remember that even an English muffin can become a sacrament, even a cup of water or tea a remembrance of God's redeeming love. Communion does not need elements. We can "taste and see that God is good," Psalm 34:8, even if we do not physically partake.

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

Offering and Contribution Collection

This service will not include a set-aside time of offering, so we want to remind you now that we do hope that you will continue to fulfill 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

Berceuse by Fauré

Ben Malkevitch, piano

Entry Into Worship

What is abundant life
And where do we see it in our homes?
How can we see bounty in the wilderness,
As boundaries restrict us from living our "fullest" life
Do we perceive God's generosity?
On what in our lives is God's light shining? To what type of service is God calling us next?
May worship be a tool of discernment, a flashlight in the shadows, and a celebration of God's generosity of Spirit.

Invocation

Holy Shepherd, Divine Leader, we look towards you in this time of quarantine. From nights in isolation to our days of fog and bewilderment, we search for your healing presence. We seek your wisdom and guidance in the coming weeks as we look towards the future. May your Spirit of Hope permeate our souls as we wander in the shadow-filled valleys. Amen.

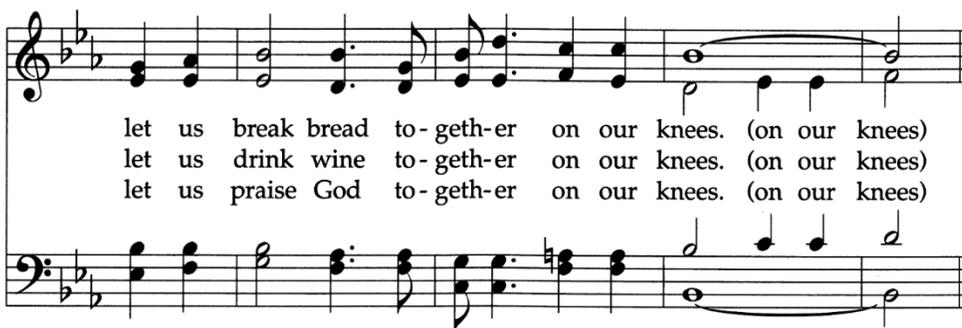
Hymn

Let Us Break Bread Together

Sung by LCC's Virtual Choir: Naomi Columna, Kay Galloway, Meghan Galloway, Peter Hampton, Tim Hampton, Noah Hamrick, Ben Liu, Joann Riordan, Robert Wenz; Ben Malkevitch, piano



1. Let us break bread to- geth- er on our knees; (on our knees)
2. Let us drink wine to- geth- er on our knees; (on our knees)
3. Let us praise God to- geth- er on our knees; (on our knees)



let us break bread to- geth- er on our knees. (on our knees)
let us drink wine to- geth- er on our knees. (on our knees)
let us praise God to- geth- er on our knees. (on our knees)



Refrain
When I fall on my knees, with my face to the ris- ing sun,



O Lord, have mer- cy on me. (on me)

WORDS: African-American spiritual
MUSIC: African-American spiritual; arr. Carlton R. Young, 1964, alt.

LET US BREAK BREAD
Irr.

Scripture Reading, read by Scott Suttell

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

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.

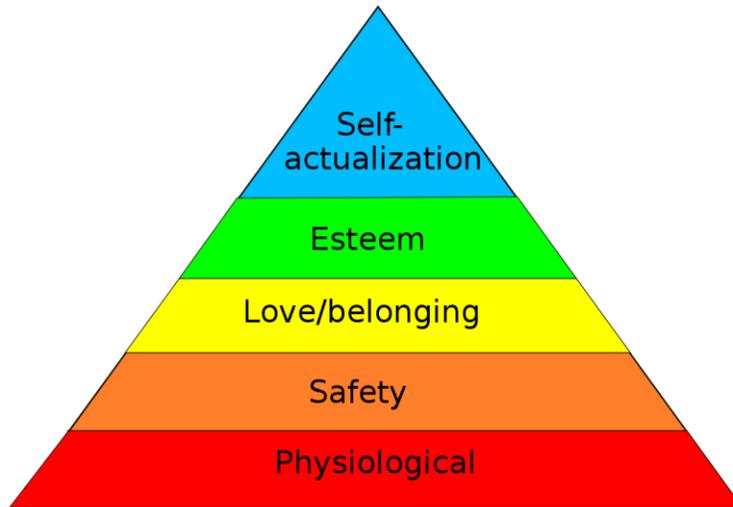
- I. One of my family's favorite shows is called Nailed It... it's on Netflix. It's a baking competition show with amateur bakers as contestants, competing to replicate complicated cakes and other confections. It's the kind of show that induces those deep belly laughs that are healing for the soul, as they try to figure out how to make certain colors, add particular flavors, and appropriately use fondant vs. regular icing. They judge on both taste and design, and they're never good, but usually better than anything I could do.
 - A. So then when they do the reveal at the end of each phase of the competition, they show what they were trying to make, and then they take off the lid or lower the curtain and show what they did make and they say, "Nailed it!" And I guess... the best attempt wins the round.
 - B. On one of these days, especially a gloomy day, I highly encourage you to watch it for some of that mindless but healing belly laughter. I call it self-care.
- II. The expression, "nailed it" has come to represent any of those moments in our lives when we're really trying to get something right, especially trying to get something to turn out top-notch, impressive, above-and-beyond expectations, and we just fall completely short.
 - A. In my house we might laugh about drawings or other creations... around Christmas time I think we said it a few times when trying to wrap presents in a somewhat attractive way and coming up short. We say it sometimes about our kids' outfits, when they dress themselves and come out wearing shorts over their pants or a heavy sweater with a summer skirt. Nailed it! Or when Suzie sings the ABCs and just-- misses some parts.
- III. And ummm.... Okay this is a long jump; stick with me. Our scripture passage from Acts really lends itself to a Nailed It! Moment. It describes the early Christian community. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... They were in awe...they had all things in common... they sold their possessions and gave to those who had need... they ate their food with glad and generous hearts... and day by day the Lord added to their number.
 - A. Okay so in the book of Acts, Luke describes the early Christian community in this idyllic way. A model of the perfect Body of Christ. Wouldn't you love to be this community? When you

read it, or hear it, you're like, "yeahhhhh I wanna be that church. Togetherness, steadfastness, fellowship, breaking bread together, prayer and praise."

- B. But friends, have you met humans? I don't care if it's the first century or the 21st century... I know what happens when people are together and it isn't this. It might be this on a really good day, for a few short moments. But in the midst of it there is competition and resentment, anger, frustration, impatience, greed, annoyances. Luke doesn't talk about the part where they're arguing about what type of bread they break together, or about the part where they talk about how much those possessions should cost when they sell them. Luke, at least in this passage, doesn't talk about the people who aren't a part of the Christian community... about the government, about the disagreements about the government... about who gets to lead. We know that this community was not as perfect as described here, because we have Paul's letters, which write to the early church already struggling with disagreements.
 - C. So here's my leap, okay? If we were to put this idyllic description of the early Christian community next to reality, we'd see a "nailed it!" moment. We'd see a bunch of humans trying-- truly trying-- to create this beautiful, beloved community, but always coming up short.
 - D. This isn't bad news. This is just the truth. The Good News, of course, is that God's grace always enters in to redeem us. That it is within our shortcomings that God teaches us about how to live and grow together, and walk more closely in the way of Jesus Christ.
- IV. Every week, at least in my home, and I suspect in yours, I have a model of what that week should look like in my head. Especially in this time when we're all sharing a crowded house, but even before this-- the model involved having the kids' school work organized and meals planned out, laundry washed and folded and put away, clarity about our schedules for the week so there aren't any conflicts, a good mood for all of us, nobody with anything to bicker about. An attitude of gratitude.
- A. But it doesn't take long for us to show each other that we're human. And by Monday afternoon when everyone is crying and complaining and we've already snapped at each other, our idyllic idea for a perfect week has gone out the window. It's a nailed it moment.
 - B. This isn't bad news. It's just the truth. The Good News is that God's grace always enters in to redeem us. We learn to laugh at our shortcomings, we learn to apologize to each other when we've come up short. We learn to do the very best we can and then to let grace fill the gap in between, and day by day we grow together as a flawed but beautiful human family that is doing what we can to walk in the way of Jesus Christ.
- V. A few weeks ago when I was in a Zoom meeting with Liz Spahr, the chair of our Exec Team, Liz reminded me about Maslow's hierarchy of needs-- the psychological framework about meeting our basic needs before we can do anything else. There are some things you need to stay alive, and then we build upon that. I think that at this point in our pandemic, in this entirely new and temporary way of living, we are so shocked by the situation that we are often still at the very bottom of that pyramid-- meeting the physiological and safety needs, and then turning to the love and belonging, the esteem, the self-actualization.
- A. So the thing is, we're totally in "nailed it" mode for a while, because we're trying to just figure out what a cake is and how to turn on the oven right now. Nobody is molding the fondant perfectly or piping perfect roses on top of their confection. We are all coming up short of our intentions. And so we need to learn to laugh at our shortcomings, to apologize to each other when we've missed the mark, to do the very best we can and then let grace fill the gap in between.
 - B. If we don't... if we fail to have grace for ourselves and one other, then it we will be paralyzed by unfair comparison. Grace is what allows us to build Beloved Community to become closer to the community that the Risen Christ desires for us.

- VI. Friends, I hate this very much, but we're in for a long haul with this. I think often of Dr. Amy Acton's dimmer switch analogy-- that in a pandemic without a vaccine you don't just flip the switch on and go back to normal. It will be a slow return to gathering, with strict social distancing rules as the mandates are lifted, with spacing and staying home and shortened services, and so it will be a while before we gather in this sanctuary the way we did in February. But I promise you that we will keep doing this-- keep bringing the Good News into your homes the best ways we know how.
- A. The vision put in front of us in the Book of Acts is one to aim for even when we are not physically together: To devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to break bread and to pray, to witness the wonders around us, to give freely of ourselves in the ways that we can, to have glad and generous hearts, praise God and have the goodwill of all the people. To continue protecting the lives of the most vulnerable.
 - B. When we aim for this idyllic vision we will come up short, because we're humans, especially when we're trying to just get a hang of meeting those basic needs. We're going to miss the mark. But it's a good mark to try for. And I know that God's grace will enter into it and help us to laugh at our mistakes, to share that grace with one another, to learn from the experience, and to try again the next day.
- VII. So Beloved, we're going to have to continue adapting to faithful ways of being the church. Some of them will be Nailed It! Moments, but we're sure trying and we're here to help you try with us, and we know because we have seen God's ability to enter in with grace.
- VIII. And we're going to have to be kind to one another and to ourselves....
- A. To recognize that we're still at the bottom of that hierarchy of needs right now, just trying to make sure we have what it takes to get through the day and feel safe.
 - B. And to recognize that we're going to mess up, miss the mark, learn from the experience, and try again.
- IX. I wanna close by just sharing something that the UCC put out this week. You may remember that last summer we filled the summer worship services with a series on the 'Be the Church' sayings of the United Church of Christ. They adapted those sayings to meet our current situation. They're not perfect, but I still like them:
- A. Be the Church. Stay Home. Social Distance. Wash Your Hands. Check on the Elderly. Live Stream Worship. Give Electronically. Support Each Other. Love God. Flatten the Curve. Pray Daily. So we can all enjoy this life.
- X. Thanks be to God. Amen.





Celebration of Holy Communion

(Pause to invite those who have not already prepared elements quickly to do so. Assure them that even an English muffin can become a sacrament, even a cup of water or tea a remembrance of God's redeeming love. Communion does not need elements. They can "taste and see that God is good," Psalm 34:8, even if they do not partake.)

Invitation

For Holy Communion this morning,
we sanctify our time and many tables
for a sacrament never confined
to sanctuaries or precious surfaces —
carved with "Do this in Remembrance of Me,"
but always following
wherever one of God precious children,
like a sheep astray,
is lost or needs a guiding.
Christ is our shepherd.
In the loneliest lockdown,
we do not want for companionship.
In crowded families —
distance-learning and never catching breath,
we find an inner source of still waters.

In the soul-stretching days
of health care and emergency professionals,
decision-makers for others,
and essential workers with daily risk,
we meet a restorer of souls.
In congregate settings—
assisted living, correctional facility, shelter,
immigration detention, nursing home,
housing for those who are simply poor —
we find a leader, a staff to lean on,
a rod that points a new way.
Christ leads us not around it,
but through the valley of the shadow —
and turns to us, as Jesus did when he came through
the walls of a locked room
in the afternoon of resurrection,
said, "Peace be with you,"
and then asked if they had anything
to give him to eat.
Give the gentle Shepherd who is the Risen Christ
your bread, your cup and your heart.

Prayer of Consecration

Leader: We have bread and cup and heart. Our church community is dispersed in distance but we are one in Christ. In your many kitchens, and living rooms, rest your hands lightly upon these elements which we set aside today to be a sacrament. Let us ask God's blessing upon them and upon us and upon those who are in our prayers this morning.

Unison:

Gentle Host, you prepare a table before us in the threatening presence of virus. You anoint our hearts, bless our bread and our cups overflow. Surely as we shelter in place we find both the goodness of community and mercy to those most vulnerable. Now and all the days of our lives we claim that this house — these many houses where we dwell and also our precious church building, are, indeed, the house of God.

Send your Spirit of life and love, power and blessing upon your children who are staying at home so that this Bread may be broken and gathered in love and this Cup poured out to give hope to all. Risen Christ, live in us, that we may live in you. Breathe in us, that we may breathe in you. Amen.

Words of Remembering

Leader: We remember the sharing of bread in many places — wilderness manna, tents and caves of shepherds, Abigail's saddle bags, the lunch of a small boy, the fish of the disciples and the loaf of Emmaus. And we remember that Paul the apostle wrote letters to congregations throughout places we now call Greece, Turkey and Macedonia, and they were the first "remote" worship resources, including these Communion words sent to the church at Corinth:

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of the Elements

Leader: Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven.

Unison: We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

Leader: Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the Cup of Blessing.

Unison: We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: Let us pray in thanksgiving for this meal of grace, rejoicing that, in the holy dispersion of virtual worship, we claim the risen Christ's love is not limited by buildings made with human hands, nor contained in human ceremonies, and celebrating the God's shepherding that carries us into the unknown, to listen and follow, to lead and be led, to feed and be fed.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed by 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 in temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

Benediction

As we leave our time together today-
May God find you pillows of comfort on which you will rest your head.
May God lead you to places and in ways that will keep you healthy and safe.
May God restore your souls during the long days and nights of quarantine.
We will not fear, for you are with us God.
You will follow us to the ends of the earth and remain with us in our homes.
Your goodness, mercy, and steadfast love will accompany us,
And we will dwell in your loving embrace our whole life long.
Amen.

Postlude

New Wine by Hillsong

Chris Burns, voice and guitar