

# Lakewood Congregational Church

*A Congregation of the United Church of Christ*

Sunday, August 2, 2020

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



## **Welcome and Announcements**

Welcome to worship on this Sunday.

*\*\*\*If you have not seen the letter and survey that went out this week, please check our website under the “media” tab, or contact the church office. The purpose of it is for our staff and lay leadership to discern how we can most effectively support this Body of Christ in our spiritual journey for the foreseeable future. Anyone who considers LCC a part of their current “leg of the faith journey” is welcome to participate, whether you’re near or far.\*\*\**

*\*\*\*Also just a quick note to let you know that Rachel and I are both taking a vacation week this coming week, so if you have a pastoral emergency, contact the church office or Pastor Sara at Trinity Lutheran Church. We are pre-recording the service for next Sunday, so you’ll hardly even notice we’re gone!\*\*\**

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 are connected to yours.

Say, “May the Peace of Christ be with you”

## **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, OH 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](http://www.lcc-church.org)
  - Call the church office at (216) 221-9555 to discuss other options
- Let us Worship God.

## **Prelude**

*If I...* (text by Emily Dickinson, music by Lori Laitman)  
Gwen Delaney, mezzo-soprano; Ben Malkevitch, piano  
(a remote collaboration)

## **Call to Worship**

Join me in our spoken call to worship.

One: The day breaks

**All: And God does not let us go.**

One: The hour calls

**All: And God does not let us go.**

One: The evening falls

**All: And God holds us fast.**

One: Let us turn to God in worship

**All: God, who never turns from us. Let us worship God.**

## **Invocation**

God, you see us. You see our struggles, you see our difficulties. You see our possibilities, you see our promise. Connect the dots for us, O God. Soften the hard spots with your blessing. Call us in our wandering to hear you say our names. Satisfy our longings as with loaves and fishes and manna from heaven. For you are a good God, a God present in the scramble, and in the end, you always, always have a blessing. For this and so much more, we give you thanks, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

## **Pastoral Prayer**

Holy God, gracious and loving God, we turn to you now, remembering you and relying on you to help us, to guide us, and to give us strength and love.

Place peace above our anxiety.

Place courage above our fear.

Place wisdom above our confusion.

Place love above our division.

We pray, God, for all those who are experiencing illness of any kind. Strengthen and comfort them. Heal their bodies completely. Heal their souls and their hearts.

Today, as we see the growing numbers of people infected by COVID-19, we say a special prayer—that you would be with each and every person. And be with our nurses and doctors and other health care workers, so many of whom are feeling overwhelmed right now.

Keep them strong and healthy.

Bring them wisdom and insight. Bring them the supplies and physical resources they need. Inspire the hearts of those who can help to carry this burden and to sow your love in even the most difficult places.

Holy One, we pray for all leaders of our nation, leaders of our cities and leaders of every state, that all may lead wisely, driven by compassion for all people and by a sense of responsibility for all they carry.

We pray for your creation, God. Help us to care for all that you have given us. Fill us with a spirit of generosity and a sense of security, that we may be free of fear and filled with your spirit of abundance and sufficiency. Give us joy and laughter to share with one another, as well as food, and safety, and justice.

O God of all creation, even as we worship in separate places and at different times, we pray that you would bind us together into one human family, loving and serving the whole world.

Even as we are scattered, we join our voices in prayer, praying as Jesus taught us, saying, Our Father . . .

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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

## Hymn *Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether*

Gwen Delaney, mezzo-soprano; Ben Malkevitch, organ  
(a remote collaboration)

*Unison*

1. Draw us in the Spir-it's te - ther, for when hum - bly  
2. As dis - ci - ples used to gath - er in the name of  
3. All our meals and all our liv - ing make as sac - ra -

in your name, two or three are met to - geth - er, you are  
Christ to sup, then with thanks to God the giv - er break the  
ments of you, that by car - ing, help - ing, giv - ing, we may

in the midst of them; Al - le - lu - ya! Al - le -  
bread and bless the cup, Al - le - lu - ya, Al - le -  
be dis - ci - ples true. Al - le - lu - ya, Al - le -

lu - ya! Touch we now your gar - ment's hem.  
lu - ya, so now bind our friend - ship up.  
lu - ya, we will serve with faith a - new.

The musical score is written for voice and organ. It features a unison vocal line and an organ accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into four systems, each with a vocal line and an organ line. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

## Invitation to the Offering

Our scripture today reminds us that when resources were short, Jesus did not worry. He saw the gifts, and multiplied them! This is the miracle we witness every time we give to the church. God will take what we have, and God will do good things with it. You are invited to give, and even to participate in the miracle of God's multiplying acts.

You're welcome to give as you are able and as you feel called today.

## Dedication Prayer

God of increase and bounty, Source of all good things: we offer these gifts as a portion of that which you have given us. May these gifts be as loaves and fishes for those who find themselves in poverty or hunger.

May this act of giving bring about change:

change in our lives,  
change in the lives we touch,  
change in the systems that harm.

Through Christ, who gave so much to save. Amen.

## Scripture Reading, read by Thom Geist

*Matthew 14:13-21*

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send

the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

### 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 a 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.

- I. This week my friend Rabbi Josh Caruso from Fairmount Temple in Beachwood taught me a new yiddish phrase: Zitsfleysh. I'll spell it for you-- Zitsfleysh. It literally means "sitting flesh" and it refers to how much time someone can sit in one spot. So someone might say, "Well, it's getting late and my zitsfleysh is worn out so I'm gonna go."
  - A. It's a word made for quarantine times. I've never in my life sat in front of my computer as much as I am these days. I have at least one Zoom call a day, often two. I'm spending a lot of time writing--

writing emails, writing updates, writing sermons, writing prayers. I watch a lot of videos and participate in webinars and worship services and webinars about worship services, and sometimes around 2:00 pm when I've been sitting at the table on my computer all day, I think to myself, "how can I possibly sit here any longer?" My Zitsfleysh has worn out.

- B. I'm not known to sit still. If you've ever been around me, you've probably never seen me sit still.
  - C. But I think many of you probably appreciate this Yiddish word, especially now. It will absolutely be an applicable word for our children for this upcoming school year, whether they are at home or in person, considering how frequently they'll be expected to sit. Children's Zitsfleysh wasn't meant for times like these.
- II. Preparing for this sermon this week, I've been keenly aware of the ways the word "enough" is spoken throughout my conversations. The feeding of the 5000 is a story about the ways in which God gives us enough-- enough food, enough financial security, enough connection, enough promise, enough hope, enough energy. So it's got me thinking about enough Zitzfleysh. Do we have enough Zitzfleysh to endure this stage on the journey?
  - A. Hear me out, because obviously we don't actually need to be sitting still all this time. In fact we must get out for walks, for bike rides, for runs, for swims. We must move our bodies and tend to the needs of our joints and our muscles. We must find ways to be wise about socializing and avoiding

isolation. It will be to the detriment of our physical and mental health if we don't. But the question is more like, "do I have what it takes to endure and live with this pandemic for a while?" Do I have enough Zitsfleysh, do I have enough patience, do I have enough endurance?

B. In the recent book of prayers I received from the United Church of Christ, written specifically for this time, there is a "Prayer for if the virus lasts longer than I think I can." It goes like this:

C. "I don't know where I am going today and tomorrow; I just know my lust and my desire for more of what I had yesterday. I also know that I am your child and beloved. I am not forgotten by you. Send me one sign today that I am still and all beloved. Just one. And when I know I am beloved, let me get back on track— whatever track might be. Amen"

III. The prayer requests one sign, one promise, one bit of hope that will give us what we need to persevere. The point I want to make is that when the question is, "do I have enough?" the answer is always yes, so long as God is present. Do I have what it takes to endure this leg of the journey? The answer is yes if God is present. Do I have enough bread to feed this big crowd? The answer is yes if God is present. Do I have enough Zitzfleysh to sit through this 30 minute worship service? The answer is yes if God is present. Do I have enough patience to care for my aging spouse or my crying child? The answer is yes if God is present. Do I have enough money to meet the needs of my family? Do I have enough personal connections to

prevent me from folding in on myself? Yes, if God is present. And... to be clear, God is present in all of it.

IV. The telling of the Loaves and Fishes is one of very few stories that is in every one of the four Gospels. Even Jesus' birth isn't in all four of the Gospels, so it's quite clear to us that the feeding of the five thousand was a story that was a real priority to the Disciples. It was too important to leave out. It's too important to Jesus and it is too important to the church. It's a story that says that when the question is "do I have enough?" the answer is always yes, so long as God is present.

A. This story echoes many stories throughout the Hebrew Bible and New Testament: the story of the Manna from Heaven, the work of the Prophet Elisha, who fed 100 hungry men with 20 barley loaves. It's a story about enoughness, but it is also a story about compassion.

B. You see as it starts out, we hear that Jesus withdrew in a boat to a deserted place. What happened right before this moment in the text is that Jesus learned the news of his cousin John the Baptist's murder. Jesus was deep in grief, and he needed to be alone, and so he retreated. But he quickly learned that he was not able to retreat, he was not able to be alone. Because before too long, the crowds closed in on him. And when any normal human would have put up a firm boundary and explained his need to be alone, or maybe even acted in anger and frustration and turned away, or slammed the door, Jesus saw that they were sick, they were sad, they were hungry, and he had compassion for them, and he healed them.

- C. As the day went on the crowds got hungry. They looked around and saw that there was no bread, and so the Disciples tried to send them away. The Disciples thought, like a normal human would, it's time that the crowds try to figure this out for themselves. It's dinner time and this is a deserted place. They need to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. Get their own food. But Jesus, King of Compassion, said, "No. Have them sit down. You give them something to eat."
- D. There are 5000 people here, PLUS women and children. We have 5 loaves of bread and two fishes. What will we give them to eat?
- E. We don't know the logistics behind the miracle, but Barbara Brown Taylor writes this, in her book "Seeds of Heaven" which I've quoted a couple of times during this past few weeks on Matthew... she writes this, "Jesus operated out of a different set of assumptions. If the disciples operated out of a sense of scarcity, then what Jesus operated out of was a sense of plenty. He looked at the same things the disciples looked at, but where they saw not enough, he saw plenty: plenty of time, plenty of food, and plenty of possibilities with the resources at hand.... What Jesus knew beyond a shadow of a doubt was that wherever there was plenty of God there would be plenty of everything else."
- F. "all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children."
- V. Oh, I love this story. It has everything. It starts with Jesus' human emotions— the grief. It moves to Jesus' compassion and preferential care for the vulnerable. It shows the growth of the Disciples from doubt to faith, and Jesus' empowerment of others to do the work of Kingdom building ("you give them something to eat"). It shows the trust, and the enoughness, and the abundance. It prepares us for the promise of Holy Communion, and the power of a meal shared. It's a story crammed full of incredible promise and empowering calling.
- VI. When we're short-sighted, we look at this miracle as if it is only about food. But if we expand our minds, scripture speaks to us differently wherever we are, and this passage speaks to us about whatever we have a feeling of scarcity about. If we feel like we don't have enough, the Feeding of the Multitudes reminds us that we do, as long as God is present. And God always is.
  - A. And so today I think many of us have a feeling of scarcity about having the endurance to live through this pandemic. "I just don't think I can do it." I don't have enough Zitsfleysh.
  - B. I'll go back to the Barbara Brown Taylor quote: "Jesus looked at the same things the disciples looked at, but where they saw not enough, he saw plenty: plenty of time, plenty of food, and plenty of possibilities with the resources at hand."
  - C. And so I return to that question I've been asking you lately: rather than longing to return, how can we invoke the plenty of possibilities God has given us with the resources at hand? How can we seize this opportunity to weave a new garment for all of creation? How can we transform our feeling of

scarcity into a trust in God's abundance? How can we recognize the plenty of possibilities God has given us with the resources at hand: that whatever it is we feel we're lacking right now, God will transform our scarcity into growth and beauty, compassion and justice, grace and empowerment.

VII. The prayer I read earlier, the prayer for if the virus lasts longer than I think I can, asks God for "one sign today that I am still and all beloved. Just one. And when I know I am beloved, let me get back on track— whatever track might be." We'll receive that sign today in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. In this promise we receive across time and space, that we always have enough as long as God is present. And God is.

VIII. Thanks be to God. Amen.

## **Celebration of Holy Communion**

### ***Invitation***

Christ's invitation is simple —  
sit down where you are.

You don't need to run off somewhere else —  
not a nearby village market or a familiar sanctuary,  
communion is where you are — sit down.

The disciples complained —  
it is a deserted place and the hour is late.

Jesus said, "They need not go away."

No one needs to go away.

No one is deserted and no one is late —  
not you who are alone,

because you are vulnerable to virus  
or you who would feel alone

even in a not-distancing crowd

because something  
has made your life a wilderness.  
Jesus has compassion on every crowd,  
healing them, even the hungers,  
one by one by one.  
Here is green grass,  
someone to help you sit down,  
someone to help you stand up again,  
someone to bless Communion,  
so it will be enough,  
and break it into pieces you can handle.  
Sit down where you are.

### ***Prayer of Consecration***

In the story about feeding a multitude, Jesus asked that people bring to him what they had. You have done that today. In your many kitchens and living rooms, rest your hands lightly upon these elements which we set aside today to be a sacrament. We ask God's blessing on them to make them enough and also to make them abundant for us and for all those who are in our prayers this morning.

**Unison: God of compassion, you bless and break everything we are and everything we bring to you. Our deep scarcity becomes enough to sustain us, and then our "enough" becomes an abundance we could never imagine. We pray that your Spirit of life and love, of tenderness and power, rest upon every bread and every cup, that they may feed the inmost need of each child of God and pour forth a grace that can change the world. Risen Christ, live in us, that we may live in you. Amen.**

### ***Words of Remembering***

We remember that on the night on which he was betrayed, Jesus shared a meal with his Disciples. He took bread, and broke it, and he shared it with his friends saying, “this is my body, broken for you, so that you may be whole.” And in the same way he took a cup of wine and he lifted it and shared it with them saying, “this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you share this cup, do it in remembrance of me.”

### ***Sharing of the Elements***

Leader: The bread on your table is blessed and broken like the picnic of grace.

**Unison: Sharing love, we will never be hungry.**

Leader: The cup on your table is blessed and shared like the overflowing of tears and joy

**Unison: Drinking deeply, we will never thirst.**

### ***Prayer of Thanksgiving***

Leader: In thanksgiving for the meal that heals yesterday and the unexpected grace that empowers tomorrow, we pray for the wisdom to give away as fast as possible some twelve baskets of leftovers ...

**O Holy One, as we received this sacrament in the holy dispersion of virtual worship, we thought we “ordered” from a select gourmet menu, and never expected to become the curbside pickup of your love and justice, of your compassion and courage, of your hope and healing for all of your children who need a meal in a deserted place. Help us gather the leftovers from the miracles in our lives and give them away. Amen.**

### **Benediction**

God’s peace: carry, keep and hold you.

God’s love: nourish, bless and enfold you.

God’s spirit: inspire, lift and mold you.

Go in peace in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One God, Mother of us all. Amen.

### **Postlude**

*He Leadeth Me*, arr. Miller

Bob Paraska, handbells; Ben Malkevitch, piano