

Lakewood Congregational Church

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Sunday, October 4, 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.

We are glad you're worshipping with us today. Welcome to our
Virtch service today!

Today's service looks a little different because of the Blessings
at Beck event at the Beck Center from 11-12 today. Hope you'll
join us there!

At Lakewood Congregational Church, we strive to be people of
extravagant welcome. Whether you are young or old, gay or
straight, single or partnered, happy or sad, confused or inspired,
street smart or college-educated, whether you can't pay your
bills or you have more than enough to share—no matter who you
are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here in
this place, to worship the 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
- Call the church office at (216) 221-9555 to discuss other options

Prelude

This Is My Father's World

Joann Riordan and Jan Young, handbells

Call to Worship

Leader: The whole world is in God's hands.

People: Everything that lives and breathes. Everything that simply is. Everything.

Leader: From the farthest spaces, to the inmost places!

People: God is with us and we are with God. Alleluia!

Leader: As people of Christ, gathered at table, with our sisters and brothers around the world, to remember whose we are, we praise –

People: Alleluia! Thanks be to God!

Leader: Shall we pray?

With all that we have, with all that we are, we worship you, God-of-all-Being.

Bless this day. Bless this time. Bless this gathering.

Bless this world, with your overflowing love. Alleluia!

People: Alleluia! Amen!

Invocation, read by Evelyn D'Agostino

God of brilliant sunsets and shining rainbows, God of golden daffodils and glowing autumn leaves, God of all the blues of sunlit seas, God of all the shades of green in bush and field, in rivers and oceans and lakes, in rough stones on a beach and polished jewels in a showcase, God of people, brown and amber, pink and ebony, artistic and athletic, practical and visionary, compassionate and laughter-bringing, God who colors us a world of variety, We thank you that you have made each of us unique, that you call us to contribute our special colors to the life around us. We come to you in thanksgiving and worship. Amen.

Hymn

His Eye is on the Sparrow

Naomi Columba, Gwen Delaney, Ben Liu, Noah Hamrick

A remote collaboration

1. Why should I feel dis-cour - aged, why should the shad-ows come,
2. "Let not your heart be trou - bled," his ten - der word I hear,
3. When - ev - er I am tempt-ed, — when - ev - er clouds a - rise,

why should my heart be lone - ly — and long for heaven and home,
and rest - ing on his good-ness, I lose my doubts and fears;
when song gives place to sigh - ing, — when hope with - in me dies, —

when Je - sus is — my por - tion? My con - stant friend is he: —
though by the path he lead-eth — but one step I — may see:
I draw the clos - er to him, for care he sets me free:

his eye is on — the spar-row, — and I know he watch - es me; —

his eye is on the spar-row, — and I know he watch-es me. —

I sing be-cause I'm hap-py, — I sing be-cause I'm free, —

for his eye is on the spar-row, and I know he watch-es me. —

Invitation to the Offering

God gives to us continually. In each breath, we receive God's spirit. Responding to God's generosity, let us give to God in thanksgiving.

Dedication Prayer

We dedicate to you, generous God, our lives. Receive these offerings as a sign of our gratitude and commitment. 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.

Scripture Reading, read by Nicky Wills

Matthew 5:4

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.'

Romans 8:31-39

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long;

we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Message

***We've included this transcript 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. I used to have this great way to start a group conversation. I used it most of the time when I was leading Restorative Justice circles in the prison work I did in Wisconsin, but I've used it in book studies, Bible studies, around a dinner table, and most recently in Zoom calls. The idea was that I would start the conversation by asking everyone to say their name and one word about how they're feeling. People would say, "I'm Joanna, I feel excited." And then we'd move on to the next person.
 - A. I say I used to think it was a great idea, because most recently, at least in our current context, a one word answer really doesn't work because we are never, ever feeling just one thing. These days I am always anxious. But I'm also always hopeful. I am always both discouraged by and deeply in love with God's people. If you ask me how I'm doing, I could be in the depths of despair at the same time as I'm bursting with gratitude for my children. There's simply no such thing as a one word check-in right now.
- II. You know that I'm always encouraging people to feel their feelings. I do that because I'm entirely convinced that God calls us to an openness about how we're feeling whether it's positive or negative. It allows God to heal us

and empower us, when God can heal and empower us, we can heal and empower the world. My encouragement here has always been reinforced time and time again by the Gospel of course, but also by the work of Brene Brown.

- A. I've been loving her most recent podcast, *Unlocking Us*, in which she interviews a wide range of authors, actors, doctors, and so on, and is almost constantly talking about the benefits of feeling our feelings and the emotional intelligence that comes with it. Most recently and most pointedly, I listened to her interview with Dr. Marc Brackett who wrote a book called "Permission to Feel: Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society Thrive." I haven't read the book yet, but I hope to. In that podcast, Brene Brown affirmed that we are all experiencing a fairly constant paradox of emotions: grief and despair, but also hope, gratitude, and optimism. Dr. Brackett says that this is in some ways a coping mechanism, a regulation strategy, to help us to acknowledge our pain and sadness while also recognizing that it isn't the end of the story.
- III. As they spoke, and I'll tell you a bit more about the interview in a minute, I kept thinking of the paradoxes of the Beatitudes, but specifically our Beatitude today: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."
 - A. Perhaps many of us hold both of these today, not in present and future tense as Jesus preaches them, but in present and present tense, as a paradox: I can only speak for myself, to tell you that I am mourning, but I am also comforted. I am mourning the loss of relationships, of traditions, of

expectations, of a picture I had for my children and for our church that is not the current reality... but I am also comforted by the caring presence of the people I love and the community I'm committed to, and even more... even so much more, beyond words... I am comforted by the unconditional, undeniable, ever-redeeming Grace of God who promises that where there is pain there will always be a Resurrection.

- IV. In this particular Beatitude, I sense that Jesus is calling us to acknowledge our grief so that we can open the door for comfort to move in. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. On the contrary, if you don't mourn, if you pretend the pain isn't there, you don't open the door for comfort to move in.
- V. In the Unlocking Us podcast, Dr. Marc Brackett makes the case for why understanding our emotions matters... why it's important to be able to name our feelings and acknowledge and feel them. This felt really helpful to me, so I wanted to share.
 - A. So he says the first reason is attentional capacity. If you're nervous, anxious, scared, feeling unsafe in any way, you can't focus and concentrate. So this is probably the reason why you can't concentrate at work right now. This is the reason why I struggle to write a sermon most weeks. Because we are so coated in anxiety and grief that our attentional capacity is shot. So if you can't focus, this is why.
 - B. The second reason Dr. Brackett says is decision-making capacity. In his book and in his interview with Brene Brown, he shares a study they did with teachers, in which they randomly assigned

them to be in a good mood or a bad mood. So in the study they'd take five minutes to think about a good day, and then grade a paper. Separately, they'd take five minutes to think about a good day, and then grade a paper. And the outcome was that the grade on the paper was one to two full letter grades different based on their mood. So they asked the teachers, "do you believe the mood you were in shifted the way you graded that paper," and 98% of them said no, even though the results of the study showed otherwise. So not only does our decision-making capacity change when we're in a good mood or a bad mood, but we also are not aware of the fact that our decisions change based on mood. This is the reason we all have such a deep sense of decision-making fatigue right now.

- C. If you listen to it, Dr. Brackett gives a few other examples of why understanding our emotions matters, but basically, what it comes down to is that when we have an awareness about our emotions and how we're feeling, it will improve our outcomes and overall health. I could say, for example, I know that a decision I make right now, when I'm in the mood I'm in right now, will not be a good decision. So instead I should take a nap, eat a snack, take a walk, call a friend, and then come back to this decision later. In other words, it's best for me to acknowledge what I'm feeling so I'm opening the door for the Spirit of God to enter in and comfort me.

- VI. This is exactly why the Beatitudes are so powerful. Jesus is teaching his crowd of particularly vulnerable and marginalized individuals and followers how to name their

feelings. And he's helping them to see that in an openness to name their feelings, they are giving God and God's Spirit permission to enter into their brokenness and offer a blessing.

VII. Often, when speaking to someone in a Pastoral Care capacity, I talk about the Ancient Hawaiian concept of the Unihipili. The Unihipili literally means "little creature" but it refers to this inner part of our mind that helps us deal with our emotions.

A. The idea is that if you experience something traumatic or painful, and in that moment you don't have the emotional energy or maturity to deal with it, then your unihipili takes that trauma and puts it inside a "black bag," zips it up, and stores it away somewhere deep in your body so that you can move forward with your life. But here's the hard part-- that black bag is not intended to be stored away forever and forgotten. Instead, it is meant to be pulled out when the time is right, and dealt with head on.

B. There are times that you might be consciously aware that you have a black bag ("I know I have to grieve, but I'm just not ready right now") and at some point in your life you might opt to go into yourself and find that black bag, open it up, and let it all go. There are other times when you might not realize you have a black bag, but your unihipili recognizes that it is time, and opens up the bag for you, releasing the emotions or experiences before you even really know they are there. This is what happens to us when we are going along, having a good day, and then all of a sudden-- a smell, a voice, a photo presents itself-- and sadness, anger,

or fear bubbles up inside of us. The black bag has been opened, and no matter what we're doing and where we are, we have to figure out what we are going to do about it. We can suppress it... put it back into ourselves, lock it back up. Or we can let it go... cry it out, breathe it out, fight it out.

C. The problem with suppressing it is that when those black bags overstay their welcome, they become like poison to our physical, mental, and spiritual selves. They become a roadblock to being healthy.

VIII. So I also asked Nicky to read from Romans 8. Rachel and I have both written about this scripture recently, as we thought it was a good focus for the year: Nothing, not even a pandemic, can separate us from the Love of God. It's a scripture I love to read for funerals and memorial services, for people who are grieving, to remind them that we belong to God both in life and in death. It is a source of great comfort.

A. But I have to say that I have seen many things separate people from the Love of God, not by God's intentions but by theirs. There is something that can separate us from the Love of God, and it is ourselves. It is ourselves when we refuse to be full and authentic, when we hide from our emotions and refuse to acknowledge them. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." But we do not have access to that same authentic, life-saving comfort if we don't allow ourselves to grieve. I'm sure that at this point you're tired of me talking about feeling your feelings. I've been talking about it for 6 months and now I keep reminding you that Jesus is talking

about it in his Beatitudes. But I think it's so important.

- B. It is my hope that we can come out of this traumatic time in our world's history with as few black bags as possible. As we name the paradox of emotions we feel-- both grief and gratitude, both mourning and comfort, both anger and hope-- It is time for us to stitch a new garment, one that isn't full of festering wounds and unaddressed pain. When we feel the full range of emotions that are bursting forth from this complete and utter upheaval of our lives, it would behoove us to acknowledge it now... grieve it out or to celebrate it or both, now... and welcome the Spirit in to comfort us, and to create a Resurrection.
- C. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- D. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Communion Hymn

1. Let us break bread together on our knees.
2. Let us drink wine together on our knees.
3. Let us praise God together on our knees.

Refrain: When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord have mercy on me.

Celebration of Holy Communion

Adapted from a Service Written by Maren Tirabassi for World Communion Sunday

Invitation to Communion

Leader: We rejoice in the God of life, who gives us bread worked with human hands, and who makes it into the bread of life.

People: We rejoice in the God of life who gives us wine: the fruit of the vine tended with daily care, and puts the flavor of the new world into it.

Leader: As the wheat and grapes are joined on this table in bread and wine,

People: May our church join together into a visual symbol for the entire world.

Naming of Countries

Leader: On this World Communion, we pray in particular for the countries that are meaningful to the members of our church. I invite you to name those countries aloud, but I will name some in particular that have had meaning in recent years:

Singapore.

Thailand.

Vietnam.

England.

Mozambique.

Zimbabwe.

Words of Remembering

Remember, the Lord, the friend of sinners,
who were the oppressed, the estranged, the weak, the sick,
widow, orphans.

Remember, the Lord, the one disliking of the common structure
and power.

Remember, the Lord, the one sharing of daily food in life.

Remember, the Lord, the one liberating from a dictator.

We remember thy suffering, O Lord, at thy Last Supper.
(Korea)

Prayer of Consecration

Leader: Jesus, You emptied yourself completely keeping nothing for yourself. Now, naked, vulnerable, you give yourself to us as bread that sustains us and as wine that consoles us.

You are Light and Truth

You are the Way and the Hope

You are Love. Grow in us.

Sharing of the Elements

The ears of wheat are broken and scattered
on the hillside to grow.

Gathered, they are broken again
and scattered throughout the city to make bread.
the bread is scattered to each home
and broken to make nourishment.

Broken and scattered, broken and scattered,
and some becomes Christ's body broken for us
as we are the people of God scattered through the city
and, perhaps, broken to give nourishment to others.

We receive this bread, broken, scattered and made whole.
(Pause)

We drink this cup, thirsty, longing, willing to be poured.
(Pause)

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We give you thanks O Lord, for all food that has arrived at our table from your generosity. Bless the people who have made it possible, from the cultivation of the earth until it arrived to us. Give bread to those who are hungry, and to those who have bread give us hunger for you. Amen

God Moment, by Patti Komperda

In The Columns this month, we briefly introduced a new idea for church called "God Moments. This is just a simple way to bring more voices and familiar faces into our Virtual Church services. Take 3-5 minutes to tell us about a way you saw God working in your life recently. Be creative! Show us a beloved pet, a family heirloom, or tell us a joke that reminded you of God's gift of laughter. Take us on a walk to your favorite spot in the park, or show us your home office setup. You can record yourself on your own device or contact the church office to set up a time to record. You are welcome to sign up to be a liturgist and share your God Moment in the same week.

Benediction

May the God of Life, be your guide on the road every day, be your refuge in times of uncertainty and be your rest in times of fatigue.

May the God of Life, strengthen you when you feel weak, comfort you when you feel sad and hug you when you feel alone.

May the God of Life, who loves you and knows you, cover you with the tenderness of a Mother. Forever.
Amen.

Postlude

Telemann Canonic Duo in F, I. Spirituoso

Arleigh Savage, bassoons