

Beachburg Fair Service July 25th, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

I do not have any specific announcements. Does anyone have anything they would like to announce?

Birthdays, Anniversaries?

Call to Worship

It is not worship unless we can rest in the Spirit.

When worship makes us exhale and

God's Spirit catches up to our body, it is worship.

When our weariness is overcome by the renewal of our God,
we have worshipped.

Good worship refuels us, uplifts us, refocuses us and gives us hope;

Come let us worship in the presence of God.

Gathering Prayer

You touch our lives, O God in many ways.

You raise us up when we feel down and discouraged.

You ground us when we are anxious and on edge.

You inspire us when we have lost the sense of who we are.

You accompany us in the many and varied journeys we undertake day by day.

Be with us in this time of worship, and give us the direction we need to face the future with hope and energy.

We pray all this in Jesus name. Amen.

Hymn: "Come Let Us Sing of A Wonderful Love"

1 Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true, tender and true,
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love, wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2 Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam? why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderers, home!

Wonderful love, wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

3 Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love!
Come and abide, come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride:
seeking to be, seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Scripture

Well do you see the scripture that are listed in the bulletin? Well you forget them as when I started working on my meditation I decided to take it in a different direction so our scripture today is from Act 2:42-47

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Meditation "What have you missed about our Worship Services?"

I don't know about you but I'm sure glad to be back together again having just been through the last year and a half, a time like no other. But I am also wondering what we can expect for the rest of 2021?

In all likelihood, the church will have to adapt into the post-pandemic world. I'm thinking it won't be the light switch we all hope for (like suddenly, we're all back on!). Instead, it will be a gradual emergence into whatever our normalized future looks

like. But I also think it is important to look back and see what we actually missed most about not gathering to worship in person in order for us to help shape the future.

There are of course so many different varieties of Christian worship;

A mass in Mozambique with clapping and colourful robes and where dancing is commonplace.

A monastic Taize service. Very simple architecture. Chanting. Quiet. Solemn. Reflective.

A charismatic service with a rocking praise band, 45 minutes of non stop singing, a congregation largely under 35 and lots of arms waving in the air.

A Cathedral Eucharist with a choir singing hymns from the renaissance era.

A small rural church with 25 devoted people holding their hymns books, ancient or modern, with the choir and organ leading them in song.

I wonder.

I wonder what you have missed about our worship services together during these pandemic times?

It will be different for each one of us.

One person might miss the live music from our band.

One person might miss the taste of the bread and wine of communion.

One person might miss the sunlight through the stain glass windows.

One person might miss the hugs they receive.

One person might miss the chance to see old friends.

One person might miss saying hello to new people who turn up.

One person might miss how the church is decorated at different times of the year.

One person might miss the feeling of contributing that comes from participating in the mission of the church.

It will be different for each one of us.

I wonder what you have missed during this time when we have not worshiped time together.

I wonder.

Maybe we can even re-imagine worship as we re-engage? So today we look at the earliest Christians and how they invented

their worship from scratch, and what can we learn? What do we look at and go "I miss that", and what do we look at and go "we could learn from that"?

Today's reading describes the life transforming worship of the very earliest Christians. It comes from just after the day of Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2, beginning at verse 42.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 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, 47 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.

This passage comes from a time of change. It is a time of creativity. For the earliest Christians they had no worship pattern to look back to, so they had to create things from scratch. For us, our two thousand year old pattern of worship has been thrown into chaos by this Corona Virus, so we have had to reinvent it, mostly by going online.

But if we as church are only an impersonal online world, then we are just a “service” for “consumers.” Not an active faith community, who are the lifeblood of the community in service, ministries, and mission.

I for one did not become a minister just to produce a pre-recorded weekly service, disconnected from fellowship and not singing and praying together. We will be doing a disservice by not emphasizing how our gathering together is based on how the early Christians in the book of Acts filled their longing for community, something that we are now able to do once again so it might be good to apply some of the principles that were so important to them and ultimately to us.

The first verse – Acts 2:42 – is one of my favourite verses in the whole bible – and serves as a heading to the rest of the passage.

“42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. “

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching

Teaching was probably the easiest thing not to lose out on during lockdown. For example It is relatively easy for me to provide you with a sermon each week – whether via YouTube or email for those who have internet access. We have reflected together on God’s word and how we can apply it to this strange current

situation. Several of you have generously commented on how helpful you are finding this.

There are unfortunately a number of people in the congregation who do not have internet access or are unfamiliar on how to use a computer. They may be feeling quite isolated at the moment so if you are friends with anyone who is not receiving the weekly sermon please do encourage them to sign up to the Facebook group if they are able or we can make arrangement for hard copies to now be delivered – its not too late for them to do so.

Teaching is the easiest thing for us not to lose out on during lockdown. I know some of you are are working harder than ever, but some are having a bit more time, why not read some Christian books? There are so many great books out there and if you would like to borrow one from my collection just let me know.

At the moment I am reading “Rabbi Jesus” by. What are you reading? If you are reading (or re-reading) something good why not write a little book review that I could include in our weekly email or on the Pastoral Charge Facebook page?

“They devoted themselves... to Fellowship”

"All who believed were together"

"Day by day, as they spent much time together"

"they broke bread at home"

"They devoted themselves... to Fellowship"

This has been impossible for us since April

I was speaking to one of you on the phone this week who said she really misses the hugs from family and friends.

Mother Theresa once said "loneliness is the leprosy of modern society". Church is fantastic at bringing people together. In our lonely modern world, people, particularly the retired, can go for days without seeing or touching another human being.

I love the fact that some people are refusing to talk about "social distancing" - replacing the phrase with "Physical distancing but social closeness"

During the last year I applaud those of you who have stayed in touch with one another.

I also love the fact that so many of you are offering to do shopping for so many of the vulnerable. It does feel at times that this awfulness is turning us into better people.

I'd say that back in the day when things were normal, we took for granted that we could invite people round to our house, it was always something we were going to do, but often something

we didn't actually get around to doing. Covid made us rethink our priorities.

Your mission if you choose to accept it – is phone one member of the congregation this week who you would not normally phone? can you phone one person whom you don't know very well or even don't know at all? It might seem a bit scary but it is a great way for us to get to know one another better.

“They devoted themselves to ...The breaking of the bread”

“they spent much time together in the temple,”

“they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,”

These earliest Christians met in small groups to worship – the breaking of the bread and I think one of the fallouts of this pandemic is that –

but they also went to the Temple daily – a very physical act

GK Chesterton described Christianity as “the most materialistic of all religions”. We are based on God being born as a human baby, God saving us through dying physically on the cross. And of course, – Jesus rising physically from the dead.

That's why our worship normally is very physical. We clap, we stand, we sing, we raise our arms in the air. We meet Jesus in

bread and wine. We hug one another. We light the Christ candle. Maybe someday we will even dance.

And all of that has been missing.

The worship is what we miss.

It has been like a long lent – a time of enforced fasting. When we get back into church, let us never take our worship service for granted again.

“They devoted themselves to – The Prayers”

“ Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles”

What makes people of faith different from people with no faith? We are not better people than those with no faith – though we can say that we are better people than we would be if we had no faith.

Churches do many good things – run Toddler Groups, run food banks, run shelters – but churches are not the only people to do those things.

But the one thing that people of faith have that other people don't is that we can pray.

The war time Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple famously said “people often say that answers to prayer are just

coincidences. But what I find is that when I pray coincidences happen. And when I don't, they don't.

While we miss the worship services, prayer is something we can do more of at this time – so lets do more!

Finally – “And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

We may have been locked in our homes, but I am encouraged that many of you have been outward looking in your faith. Some of you have told me of how you have reached out to family members who you haven't engaged with for years. Several of you have told me how you are sharing these sermons with family members, colleagues and neighbours.

During this storm, it is our faith that gives us an anchor. Let's not be selfish and keep that anchor for ourselves. In a respectful and generous way, let us share it with others, binding together as community in worship that we have so truly missed. Thanks be to God.

Offering – Today's offering will go to the Whitewater ministerial to continue our work within the community. If you have an envelope we will see that its gets to the correct treasurer for your church.

Hymn: “Tell Me The Stories of Jesus”

1 Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear,
things I would ask him to tell me if he were here:
scenes by the wayside, tales of the sea,
stories of Jesus, tell them to me.

2 First let me hear how the children stood round his knee,
I shall imagine his blessing resting on me;
words full of kindness, deeds full of grace,
all in the brightness of Jesus' face.

3 Into the city I'd follow the children's band,
waving a branch of the palm tree high in my hand;
one of his heralds, yes, I would sing
loudest hosannas! Jesus is king!

Pastoral Prayer & Lords' Prayer

Dear God of life,
when we feel happy to be alive, you are there.
When we feel weary and sad, you are there.
When the day is beautiful and is full of light and promise, you are there.
When the night closes in with gloom and despair, you are there.
In all things, in all places, in every moment, you are with us.
You know us and are within us from the inside out.
Gracious God our prayer time with you is not just about passing
on requests or compliments – We pray to be connected with you.
You are the beginning and the end of all things.
In this connection we find our joy. We find our peace.
We find solace in hard times. We find company in times of celebration.
We pray now for those who are close to us who are in need of your healing power.
We pray for those families who are grieving the loss of a loved one since we last
met and pray especially for the Powers, Gutz, Stevenson, McLeese and Weedmark
families.
We pray for others who need your strength and healing as the infection rates
continue to climb in certain areas of this world. May you comfort them in the loss
of their loved ones.
Finally Lord we pray for ourselves. We pray to release our hearts from compulsion
and worry as we hand our fears and concerns over to you.
Our hope, our trust, is in you and in your Son Jesus who taught us to pray saying,
Our father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come. Amen.
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name, thy kingdom come, they will be
done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our
trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and
ever. Amen.