

AN ORDER FOR WORSHIP ONLINE
The Second Sunday of Easter, April 19, 2020
Lyons-Muir Church
Ionia First United Methodist Church

I. CENTERING OUR HEARTS & MINDS FOR WORSHIP

Prelude “Won’t you be glad when he calls you!”
African-American Spiritual

Alleluia! Christ is risen.
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Keep watch, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

Mark 13: 35-36

Let us join our hearts and voices in song:

Sung by Bill & Pat Tromatter (LMC)

**Open the eyes of my heart Lord,
open the eyes of my heart, I want to see you...
To see you high and lifted up,
shining in the light of your glory:
Pour out your power and love,
as we sing Holy! Holy! Holy!
I want to see you!**

Let us join our hearts and minds in prayer:

Thank you, LORD, for this time of worship, for the gift of each other across time and space, and for the gift of your presence that sustains us. May the joy of our prayers and praise sanctify us in the knowledge of your grace, and may your Spirit lift us up that we may believe where we do not see. As we discover your New Creation near at hand through acts of justice and love, turn our darkness into the dawn of your everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Welcome & Announcements

Song of Praise & Exaltation

“Come Alive”
sung by Lauren Daigle

Through the eyes of men it seems
There's so much we have lost
As we look down the road
Where all the prodigals have walked
One by one the enemy has whispered lies
And led them off as slaves

But we know that you are God
Yours is the victory
We know there is more to come
That we may not yet see
So with the faith you've given us
We'll step into the valley unafraid, yeah

As we call out to dry bones come alive
We call out to dead hearts come alive
Up out of the ashes let us see an army rise
We call out to dry bones, come alive

God of endless mercy
God of unrelenting love
Rescue every daughter
Bring us back the wayward son
And by your Spirit breathe upon them
Show the world that you alone can save
You alone can save

[chorus]

So breathe, oh breath of God
Now breathe, oh breath of God
Breathe, oh breath of God, now breathe

[chorus]

II. THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

O Lord, open our lips,
And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory be to you, Lord Jesus Christ: in your resurrection you renewed the divine promise of eternal life. As we continue to celebrate your victory over Death, may the holy scriptures make light the heaviness of these days, trusting in the Spirit to give us strength. Amen.

The Holy Gospel, according to John, 20: 19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

These are the words of eternal life.
Praise be to you, Lord Christ.

A Psalm of David, 16

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."
As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.
Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.
I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
I keep the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.
You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

Observe a time of silence.

We praise your holy Name, Author of all Being, for all the blessings of this life, and for the promise of eternal glory in Jesus Christ. Reveal the path of life in all our circumstances, that we may follow it with hope and live in the joy of the Spirit. Amen.

Song of Ascent

“A Quiet Place”
sung by Take 6

There is a quiet place
Far from the rapid pace
Where God can soothe my troubled mind.
Sheltered by tree and flower
There, in my quiet hour with Him,
My cares are left behind.

Whether a garden small
Or on a mountain tall
New strength and courage there I find
From this quiet place
I go prepared to face
A new day, with love for all mankind.

The Acts of the Apostles, 2: 14a, 22-32

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

‘I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will live in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.
You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

“Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

‘He was not abandoned to Hades,
nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Observe a moment of silence.

Reflecting on the Scriptures: “When the Wind Comes”

Like so many of you confined to your homes, my wife, Jessica, and I are often at pains to discern an activity which we'd both really enjoy. And the end of these long, exhausting days of juggling parenting and work, TV gets old, the jigsaw puzzles are too daunting, we don't have the brains for a board game, and we don't have the stamina to form one more idea or thought. So our fallback is always reading – there's always something to read... a magazine, or the scriptures, or evening prayer, or the news (such as it is), or... best of all: a story.

One set of novels to which I periodically return is the saga by the British author, C. S. Forrester, which chronicles the life and times of a Captain in the British Royal Navy during the Napoleonic wars: namely, Horatio Hornblower. One of the things I love about these stories is Forrester's ability to convey the arduous life of human beings trying to sail vast ships amidst the shifting temperament of the High Seas – first violently flinging all-comers across its surface in the grip of its tempests; and then belligerently opposing all movement in the calm of the Doldrums.

The Doldrums? Yes. The Doldrums.

Defined by the Oxford American Dictionary as “a state of inactivity, stagnation, or depression”, for sailors the doldrums means an utter absence of *wind*. At several points in Hornblower's travels, he encounters these infuriating calms along the line of the equator in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean. The

ensuing periods of inaction aboard sailing ships that invariably accompany a lack of wind, were not good for the Royal Navy. During the Doldrums, fights became worse, the abuse of the sailors by the officers often became brutal, all were prone to drunkenness, and if the enemy was sighted, one could do nothing about it. All of this was terrible for the moral of a military vessel. For men at sea, charged with the defense of the British Empire in a time of vicious war, the Doldrums were a kind of prison in which there seemed no relief from the long days of waiting and the sense of being helplessly carried by the current.

Let us pray:

God of wind and wave, flower and tree,
metal and stone, flesh and blood,
wires and laptops, batteries and utility bills –

You who have the whole world in your hand:

What we need now is for you to MOVE...
Make our small words become for us the Living Word,
that we might be set entirely free to follow the promptings of the Spirit:
the Great Wind that animates all life!

Amen.

We've been in the Doldrums these many weeks now, caught in the shiftless seas of our moods and various occupations. From day to day we're up, then down, as the rolling swell of isolation passes under us. Sometimes we're active, cleaning out closets and writing letters and making phone calls; then we're abject and lethargic, getting drunk on the dregs of Television and the Internet. We find ourselves in a bit of disarray, wondering when and how this COVID-19 mess will end. We read, we listen, we obey recommendations from physicians and government; but we don't really know anything do we? Like Hornblower, suffering the long days of waiting in the mid-Atlantic, we don't have any clue when all this is going to let up. We are prisoners of circumstance, and – all in our own ways – we detest it extremely. And for those of us who are Christians, these problems play out in specific ways.

Part of our problem is the way our current circumstances create an odd state of affairs in the spiritual life of the Body of Christ. The festival of Easter Sunday, with its ritual and music and high spirits, usually marks a major change: the end of Lent and a shift from the horror of the Cross to the unexpected hope of the Resurrection. But a palpable experience of this shift didn't happen this year, at least not to me. This year it felt as though Lent plowed right through the end of Holy Week, through Easter, and has us trapped. But let us examine our experience of this spiritual event closely, because I believe that a truer experience of Easter lies hidden within what is happening to us.

Take Peter as the example. In our reading from Acts today, Peter appears to be sure of himself and the message he has for Israel. But this is entirely different from his fretful appearance in the Temple courtyard the night before Jesus was killed. Remember that episode? How after the Temple Police arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter follows the lynch mob to the Temple? Then, unable to control his fear of association, he denies Jesus three times? Remember that version of Peter? A man cowering in fear, vehement in denial, self-deprecating in shame, duplicitous in falsehood? So what accounts for the change in Peter? How does he go from being afraid and confused to courageous and certain? Well... Jesus has something to do with it, as we see in today's reading from John's gospel. As the resurrected Christ breathes on Peter --

He fills him with the power of the Holy Spirit and
turns him from a follower to a leader...
from a sheep into a shepherd...
from an ordinary and somewhat confused fisherman into an Apostle of the Good News...

After the terrible and life-shattering experience of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, Jesus sets Peter free from his fear and shame to pick right up exactly where Jesus left off: proclaiming and enacting the Reign of God's Righteousness, the kingdom of heaven at hand.

Often we focus on these two book ends of Peter's experience of the Passover, perhaps because there's not very much written about him. In fact, after telling us that they buried Jesus on Friday evening, the Scriptures are absolutely silent about what any of Jesus' friend or family did on the Saturday. ***But it is this in between time, dear friends, that speaks to us most in our circumstances today!*** In between Peter's failure and Jesus' gift of the Spirit, Peter is in the doldrums. There's a flat calm in his life and no Wind to steer by. He has no idea where to go or what to do or even who he is. He's no longer a fisherman. He's no longer a disciple. Is he anything at all?

In the quiet of our isolation and the flat calm in our communal life, we linger behind the locked doors of our circumstances, sometimes afraid and often confused. We treat others with suspicion, we lack inspiration, we falter in prayer, and we grow lackluster in love. But the significance of this moment lies precisely IN the tension between our current experience and God's promise of new life lies: **our circumstances are more like Holy Saturday than anything I've ever experienced.**

Despite the fact that I can't see or feel God moving... ***GOD IS MOVING!*** Just like God moved on Holy Saturday, sending the Son into the depths of Hell - not to be captive! for the scriptures tell us that Death has no power over Christ. No, God sends the Son into all the dark places inhabited by Evil to wreak havoc, and to take the keys of Hell's gates from the hand of Satan himself!!

So despite the fact that my spiritual life right now often feels ineffective, and a dollar short, and a day late... and the doors of my heart and mind seemed locked with no key.... Jesus himself waits to suddenly reappear, to speak Peace at the moment when it will bring about the greatest transformation in me.... and in you.

WE ARE CONFINED... BUT -- GOD -- IS -- NOT!! We are confined by our circumstances, our moods, our emotions, our doubts, our fears, our irritation, our anger, our self-righteous criticism of others... but God is not! In fact, the Lord Jesus is making ready to call us all again to ministry in a new world where all our assumptions and privileges have been shattered by the outright suffering of humanity being unequivocally forced upon our notice. Something lies in store for the Church on the far side of this flat calm, and even though we might not understand what direction we're headed in, carried along by the current of a global pandemic, God knows exactly how to chart our course. And when the Wind blows - when the Spirit moves - we must be ready!

There might be a flat calm in your spirit right now... and your back might ache from sittin' around... But stretch your spirit with prayer, and stretch your back and legs and neck and get up outa that chair! Get ready... because the Wind, She's a coming! and when the Spirit begins to blow in the life of the Church once more, *we will not* go back to the same tired old status quo religion. Just as Peter can't go back to his assumptions and preconceived notions, Jesus will turn us from sheep into shepherds, from ordinary folks into the Apostles of the Good News! After Jesus has transgressed the locked doors of our isolation... After he has breathed the deep peace of eternal life into our souls and set us free for the Work of the New Creation..... we'll be ready to pick up - not where we left off - but where HE did! And as the old song goes... On that great gettin' up mornin', fair thee well... fair thee well!!

Praise be to you, Lord Christ!
Praise be to you, Breath of Life!
Praise be to you, God of Tempest and Calm:
Together in the Oneness of Your LOVE,
You've got the whole world in your hands!

III. WE RESPOND TO THE LIVING WORD

The Offering

“He’s got the whole world in His hand”

Leontyne Price, soprano

He’s got the whole world in His hand.
He’s got the woods and waters in His hand.
He’s got the sun and the moon
right in His hand.
He’s got the whole world in His hand.

He’s the birds and the bees, in His hand.
He’s got the beast of the field right in His hand.
He’s got the whole world in His hand.
He’s got you and me, right in His hand.
He’s got everybody in His hands!

*Please send in your offering each week (or month) through the mail.
Contact the church if you need assistance with your offering.*

The Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God the Father, infinite in wisdom, power and love, whose mercy is over all his works, and whose will is ever directed to his children's good.

We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of man, the gift of the Father's unfailing grace, the ground of our hope, and the promise of our deliverance from sin and death.

We believe in the Holy Spirit as the divine presence in our lives, whereby we are kept in perpetual remembrance of the truth of Christ, and find strength and help in time of need.

We believe that this faith should manifest itself in the service of love as set forth in the example of our blessed Lord, to the end that the kingdom of God may come upon the earth. Amen.

The Confession and Absolution of our Sins

Let us confess our sins together, knowing that our whole life, every thought word and deed, is lived in God's presence:

The Good News of your power over death makes us glad, dear heavenly Father,
but we would also come humbly before you
seeking the renewal of our lives for your purpose.

We admit that we have not always taken the resurrection of Jesus seriously.
Often our imaginations are unable to understand how this could be true,
so we live as if it is not.

And as we take our lives in our own hands,
we blame you for the suffering of the world,
instead of confronting the sins of our lives and our society.

In our doubt, we do things, and say things,
and think things that harm ourselves and others;
and we take for granted the wonderful gifts you have given:
we harbor negative and meanspirited thoughts toward others;
we misunderstand and misuse the gift of our embodiment;
we eat too much, we drink too much;
we look for fulfillment in entertainment,
and our souls wither on the vine.

Forgive us we pray, God of justice and truth.

Abide in us, Spirit of holiness:

free us for joyful obedience,
that we might travel the path of your love
and transform our communities with your life-giving power.

This we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ and for His sake. Amen.

May the Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, pardon and deliver you from all your sins through Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness by the power of the Holy Spirit, and keep you in eternal life, which has already begun. **Amen.**

For freedom Christ has set us free! May his peace dwell in us richly, giving us the courage to stand in the face of Evil, Sin, and Death with the time that is given to us.

Thanks be to God!

Celebration and Praise

“O God, Our Help in Ages Past”

sung by the Cambridge Singers

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Beneath the shadow of thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guide while troubles last,
And our eternal home!

The Prayers of the People

(Form II, Book of Common Prayer)

Let us pray for God's people throughout the world; for our Bishop, David; and for this gathering.
Pray for the Church.

Silence

Let us pray for peace; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all people.
Pray for justice and peace.

Silence

Let us pray for the poor, the sick, the hungry, the oppressed, and those in prison.
Pray for those in any need or trouble,

Silence

Let us pray for those whose labor places them in harm's way: especially the women and men risking their own safety and that of their families in the tension and danger of our healthcare systems.
Pray for that all our labor may not be in vain.

Silence

Let us pray for all who seek God, or a deeper knowledge of the Divine.
Pray that they may seek and be found by the Spirit.

Silence

Let us pray for the departed.
Pray for those who have died.

Silence

Let us praise God for those in every generation by whose lives God has been honored, especially Emma Lazarus, whose poem and prophetic voice inspire us today with the promise of the resurrection.

Pray that we may have grace to glorify the Creator in the living of our days.

Silence

Let us pray for those who have asked us to carry their needs to God.

In the congregation at First United Methodist we pray for:

Aubrey Jackson

Hayden Courtland

Al Irby

And those whom we name aloud or in our hearts...

In the congregation at Lyons-Muir Church we pray for:

Bob and Judi VanderVeen

Carolyn Piercefield

Joan Galbavi

And those whom we name aloud or in our hearts...

Let us pray for grace and guidance:

O God, the Almighty and Everlasting Creator, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your commandments, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us pray for the mission of the Church:

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us pray as Jesus taught us:

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 sins, 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 forever. Amen.

Song of Renewal and Hope,

“The Lady of the Harbor” by Lee Hoiby

David Carle, tenor

Michael Woytiuk, piano

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

IV. BLESSING & DISMISSAL

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common and private prayers to you; and you have promised, through your well-beloved Son, that when two or three gather in your Name, you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and prayers of your servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. **Amen.**

May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us always.

Thanks be to God.

Go now in the freedom of the Spirit of Life to love and serve God and your neighbors in all that you do. And may God be with you till we meet again.

Amen.