

Worship Service- October 2nd, 2016

The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am.

After a short prayer with the choir, the liturgist, choir, and organist will enter behind the Pastor and take their seats. The pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make these announcements....

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE

"Come, Thou Fount"

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

CHORAL CALL TO WORSHIP

“Rejoice in the Day!” - Dan Dykema

The Choir

After the Choir sits down, the liturgist will step to the pulpit & say...

“Would you join me in reading responsively our call to worship, adapted from Psalm 84 and printed in our bulletins.”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Isaiah 55)

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;

You that have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread;

Why do you barter your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me: “Eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;

Let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts;

Let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them;

Let them come back to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;

For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant.

And you shall call nations that you do not know,;

Nations that do not know you shall run to you,

Because the Lord your God, has glorified you.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer....

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... God of all, we thank you for adopting us as your children, for melting the hardness of heart that locks us into our own narrow point of view and keeps us from sharing our lives fully with brothers and sisters who are different from us. As we acknowledge our one Lord, let us also share one spirit and purpose as well, which will challenge our smallness of heart and bring us humbly to take our place in the one body of Christ, His church. Teach us, that we might fulfill our role as parts of his body and members of your family. Amen.

“Would all of you who are able, please stand and join in singing “I Come with Joy”, #507 in *The Hymnal*.

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

“I Come with Joy”

The Hymnal #507

After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say....

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

If we say we have no sin, we call God a liar and reveal that the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, He who is faithful and just will forgive our transgressions and help us to live as children of the light. Let us pray together the prayer of confession printed in our bulletins, pausing at its end for a moment of silent prayer. Let us pray.....

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

(In Unison)

We confess, O God, that our abundance has tricked us into believing that we are independent, self-sustaining creatures. Filled with pride at what we have accomplished, we have become resentful of the extension of your grace to those who appear to have done nothing to deserve it. We carefully separate ourselves from the unrighteous and the unworthy, while forgetting that it was for the unrighteous you died. Forgive us from our pretentious goodness that overlooks our many faults sin and for withholding grace from others no more unworthy than ourselves. Amen.

*SILENT CONFESSION

(pause for about 30 seconds of silence)

*THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The proof of God's amazing love is this-- While we were yet sinners Jesus Christ died for us. Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

*GLORIA PATRI

The Hymnal #579

Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World without end. Amen, Amen.

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in his blood. For he is our peace, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between us and reconciled us both to God. He preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

"At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a message from the Lord prepared just for them by Ms. Karen."

The liturgist will take a seat until after the handbells.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

(All Singing)

Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;

Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;

Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.

As the handbell choir leaves, the Liturgist will step to the pulpit and say,

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We have been given many blessings, not just to enrich our own lives, but so that we might be a blessing to others in Christ's name. Let us share that bounty to be used in the service of the Gospel as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

Take your seat for the offertory.

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"Pray that Jerusalem May Have Peace" by Douglas E. Wagner.

*DOXOLOGY

(In Unison)

The Hymnal #592

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the pulpit and say...

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray... We empty our pockets, trusting you, O God, to provide all that we need. We present ourselves for your service because you have given so much of yourself to us in so many ways. We ask that you would receive what we bring and follow these gifts with your blessing so that every tongue on earth may confess Christ as Savior and share in that same mind which so powerfully demonstrates your love for us and our love for one another. Amen.

Be seated.... While we are seated, let us reaffirm our Christian faith as Mik Sulkowski reads the Apostles Creed in Polish as we follow along silently to the traditional English version printed in our

bulletins....

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

“The Apostles’ Creed”

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick & the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The liturgist will invite the congregation to... “Be seated,” and then take his seat.

ANTHEM **"For Where Love Is, There Is God" by Douglas E. Wagner** **The Choir**

As the choir sits down, the liturgist will step to the lectern & say...

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Acts, beginning with the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along with the passage printed in your bulletins as Dr. Pierre Boumtje reads this Gospel lesson in his native language of Basaa (buh-SAW). Listen now for the Word of God. . . .

The liturgist will return to his seat, while Dr. Boumtje moves into the lectern.

“Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.”

The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

When Dr. Boumtje finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our Sermon text for this morning is taken from the Prophet Isaiah, the fifty-sixth chapter, beginning at the third verse. You can find the passage on page 636 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God. . . .

“Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."

For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off.

"And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, every one who keeps the sabbath, and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant -- these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be

called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered."

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Our thanks be to God!

THE SERMON

“Is There Room for Me”

Today’s new testament reading involves one of those church meetings that most of us I think, hate to attend because it was one of those church meetings where you have to pick a side and take a stand.

The issue was clear: Are we going to admit into the full membership of the church, foreigners, people who don’t know the the difference between a prelude and a postlude or hymn from a hangnail. Why, only yesterday they were worshiping idols! Shall we simply, upon their say so, admit them into the fellowship? Is that enough? That was the question.

Old church members would prefer to just keep quiet and not deal with it. Whose stirring up all this dissension and conflict anyway? Whose fault is it?

Luke says that the fault is God's. That God sent the Holy Spirit to push and shove the church beyond ethnic borders, national borders, social borders, economic borders so that repentance and forgiveness be preached to all nations. Usually Luke’s focus is strictly on what God is doing, but every once in awhile, Luke turns the camera around and lets it focus upon the people. Here in Acts 15, the focus is upon the church and how it reacts to beig pushed and shoved out of its comfort levels. It’s not very pretty, kind of like making sausage.

But Luke will also occasionally focus on one of the outsiders whose future is at stake, one of these people whose fate is being debated in the church. Shall we let them in or shall we not let them in? In Acts 8, Luke turns the camera upon one of these people, the Ethiopian eunuch in his chariot riding from Jerusalem to Gaza.

The word Ethiopia, since the days of Homer, had been sort of a nickname or a symbol for the end of the world. They used the place, Ethiopia, the same way we use the place, Timbuktu.

Eunuchs were very useful servants to the rulers and people of substance, usually queens, who had had them neutered to begin with. No wife, no children, no anything to distract. Devoted, single-minded, loyal, they were very useful.

But they were anathema to good Jews. Deuteronomy 23:1: "The eunuch shall not be permitted in the assembly of the people of God" Could it have been any clearer in telling the eunuch, “You are not welcome.” Why doesn't he just make it easy on himself? Is he one of these people who entertains the notion that if you rise to a certain level of power, a certain level of wealth) then the rules don't apply to you anymore? He is a wealthy man. He has his own Bible. He's driving his own chariot. Maybe he **IS** thinking, “The rule doesn't apply to me.”

I don't know. Why does he do it? Even if a careless usher, or if someone was clueless enough to let him in he wouldn't fit in. The moment he got inside it would be obvious to everybody. "You don't fit in; you just don't fit in. I mean even if we let you in, you don't fit in."

Fred Craddock once shared his own experience with a church meeting like the one from Acts today. It was his first student church in East Tennessee. He worked there in the summers as a seminarian and it was about twenty miles from Oak Ridge. The atomic energy thing was booming and folks were coming and building that little town into a city. Folks were coming from everywhere. Hard-hat types, in tents and trailers and little temporary huts and all kind of lean-tos. They covered those beautiful hills with the most temporary of quarters-- hand dug outhouses, wash hung out on fences and branches, little kids crying in the muddy yards.

Fred said that his was an aristocratic little church with a white frame building near by. It was a nice church with wonderful people. He called the board together and said, "We need to reach out to those folk who are here. They just come in from everywhere and they're fairly close. Here's our mission."

The chairman of the board said, "Oh I don't think so."

Fred said, "Why?"

He said, "They won't fit in. After all, they're just here temporarily, living in those trailers and all."

"Well, they may be here temporarily but they need the gospel, they need a church, now why...?"

"No, I don't think so."

The board meeting lasted a long time. Called the next meeting for the next Sunday night. The upshot of it all was a resolution. The resolution was offered by one of the relatives of the chairman of the board and the resolution basically was this: "Members will be admitted to this church from families who own property in the county." It was unanimous except for Fred's vote and he was reminded that he couldn't vote.

Years later, when he was called to Candler Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, Fred and his wife Nettie took a side trip back to the scene of his first pastoral failure. He had a hard time finding the church because Interstate 40 had been built through there, but he finally found the county road, and back nestled in the pines, still there, shining white, was the little church building he had remembered. Just like it was, except now cars and trucks were parked everywhere. And a big sign out front: "Barbecue. All you can eat, chicken, ribs, pork."

They went inside for lunch and saw those same beautiful oil lamps hanging on the wall. They still had the old pump organ that one of the kids always had to stand there and pump while it was being played. It still looked beautiful, but now it's just there for decoration.

The pews which had been cut from a single poplar tree were around the walls and people were waiting in line to get a table; there were a lot of those folding plastic tables. And the place was full of all kinds of people. Listen, they're Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, dwellers of Mesopotamia.

Fred said to Nettie, "It certainly is good this is not a church now. These folk would not be welcome....**They wouldn't fit in.**"

Why does this Ethiopian eunuch keep doing it? You know what he's doing? What kind of man is this who would walk around the outside, look over the fence, ask people what's going on. "How was the service? How was the sermon? What did the priest do? Were there many people there?" Is that worship?

I ask you.... Why would anyone continue to knock at a door that had been shut and locked against him?

Look at Deuteronomy again. "Eunuchs are not welcome. Stay out!"

But he's in his chariot and what is he doing? He's flipping the pages of the Bible to find his own name. Everyone in the world wants that. I want to find my name. I want to find a verse that says, this one is here just "for me" and I'll make a note of it in the margin. That's who I am. Just a little promise, just a phrase, ...something. We all do that.

I have a friend whose son, a university student, was killed in a wreck and my friend kept saying it was God's will. One elder in his church couldn't stand it and some weeks after the funeral he said, "James, you can't say that anymore, that it was God's will that he be killed in a car wreck. Don't say that." He looked at him with level gaze and said, "Leave me alone. I will say that... What's the alternative that you've got to offer? You'll probably say it was an accident. Now which do I prefer, to believe that God knew my son, that God had something in store for my son, that God had a purpose for my son? Or your theology that says, 'It was an accident.' I'll take mine; leave me alone."

Even in death people want to say, "Ah, there's my name. God knows me."

And so he's reading in Isaiah and he finds it. It's almost too good to be true. There it says in Isaiah:

"No longer let the foreigners say surely the Lord will separate me from his people. No longer let the eunuch say I am but a dry tree for thus says the Lord God. The days are coming when the eunuch, who hears my voice and obeys my law and keeps my covenant, I will give him a place in my house and I will give him a name and it shall be to him as generation and generation and generation of children. Better than sons and daughters it shall be to the eunuch."

And Philip said, "Do you understand what you're reading?" He said, "No, I don't have anybody

to help me, but I found some good stuff here.... now, I know I'm just an Ethiopian and a eunuch to boot, but it says here, "No longer,... no longer let the foreigners say surely the Lord will say, 'get out.' I know I'm a eunuch and I know what it says in Deuteronomy, but it says in Isaiah, "No longer let the eunuch say I'm just a dry tree. Listen I will bless you and you will be remembered and it will be better than children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren forever."

"Uh, Philip, do you suppose it's possible,, do you think it is possible, ...could I be a member of the church?"

And Philip said, "I can think of a hundred people who are going to be upset but, yes. I don't know how this is going to go over back home, but yes. In fact, I feel a little awkward myself because I've never been in this situation and I'm not handling it well, but yes. In fact, I'm surprised at hearing myself say this, but yes. Because the fact of the matter is, who am I to say no when it is clear that God has already said yes."

Would he have a place here? Is there anyone who is not welcome? Is there still room at the table? All those in favor, please come forward in a moment to cast your vote.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER

Our Father. with so much bitterness abroad in this poor bleeding world grown hard with hate and disabled by distrust, stumbling from blunder to blunder-- may we who own the name of Christ, freely the seeds of Your love.

We pray for a broader vision of the needs of all humankind,
for a deeper compassion to fill those needs;
for a tapping of the wells of generosity.

Help us to live together as people who have been forgiven a great debt.

Help us to be gentle, walking softly with one another.

Help us to be understanding, lest we shall add to the world's sorrow or cause one needless tear.

Help us to stand for what is right, simply because it is right.

Lend us your strength and wisdom that we may tear down the barriers of creed or race that this and preceding as generations have worked so hard to build. Make our love may be like your own - a love that sees all people your children and our brothers.

As we gather together around your family table hosted and supplied by our Lord Jesus, may we be so filled with your goodness that this bread and this wine will be food that endures to eternal life, sustaining our witness and service in Christ's name to the end of our days. May we take our place in the communion of all the saints, and feed upon your mercy forever. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With the confidence of the people of God, let us pray silently in English the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us, as Gisela Sulkowski reads it aloud in Spanish.

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; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Let all who are able stand and sing our hymn of invitation, "One Bread, One Body" which is printed in our bulletins and shown on the screen at the front.

*HYMN OF INVITATION

"One Bread, One Body"

*One bread, one body, one Lord of all, One cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many, throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord.*

Gentile or Jew, servant or free, woman or man, no more. Refrain.

Many the gifts, many the works, one in the Lord of all. Refrain.

Grain for the fields, scattered & grown, gathered to one, for all. Refrain.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation

God knows that we are sinners. Yet it is for you that he gave his body and his blood that we might be fed upon the bread of life and drink from the cup of salvation. Allow him to wrap you in his righteousness, to hide your sins beneath his own perfection, and then come. Come to eat your fill and drink deeply of his pardon, for this is his feast and you are invited, not because you are worthy, but because he loves you. He has set a place at His table for you.

The Words of Institution

On the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took the bread, and gave thanks saying, “*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam, Hamotzi Lechem Min Ha-aretz.* (Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who brings forth **bread** from the earth.)” Then he broke it & gave it to his disciples saying: “Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

In like fashion after they had eaten, he took the cup and said, “*Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha’olam borei p’ri hagafen.* (Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.)” After he had given thanks he gave it to his disciples saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, drink ye all of it.”

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes again in final victory.

The Distribution of the Elements

We will be sharing the Lord’s Supper this morning by means of intinction. Please come forward, beginning with the choir and then proceeding from the front pews by way of the center aisle. Receive a small piece of bread from the server, dip it into the cup, place it into your mouth, and return to your seat by way of the side aisles. If it is difficult for you to come forward, please remain in your seat and the elements will be brought to you.

The Prayer After Receiving

Gracious God, you have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life, and renewed us for your service. Help us who have shared Christ's body and received his cup, to be so renewed in our love for you & for others, that we may remember always the debt of love we owe, and that our love may become your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our clo-sing hymn, “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”, which is printed in our bulletins.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

“Blest Be the Tie That Binds”

The Hymnal #438

*THE BLESSING

(Dr. Martine Boumtje will offer the benediction in French after which Rev. Morgan will offer the same benediction in English.)

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

“Let There Be Peace On Earth”

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;

Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.

With God as our Father, brothers all are we.

Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me; Let this be the moment now.

With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:

To take each moment & live each moment in peace eternally.

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis