

Centennial United Methodist Church

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Equipping Ourselves for the

GO



September 6, 2020

CENTENNIAL MULTICULTURAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

September 6th, 2020 – 10:00am – Facebook, YouTube, and ZOOM

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Year A

GATHERING

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING PRAYER (in unison):

Gracious God, we come this day seeking courage and hope for the future. Our world is in such peril. Heal these wounds and quiet the words of war. Help us to be those who bring peace in our families and communities. Banish the darkness of doubt and fear; anoint us with your light and love that we may spread the good news of your mercy to everyone. In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Leader: How shall we live in the love of God?

People: We will treat one another with fairness and dignity.

Leader: How shall we witness God's forgiving love?

People: We will reach out others with compassion.

Leader: Come, let us worship God who has always loved us.

People: Let our worship of God be reflected in our lives of hope and peace. AMEN.

HYMN:

I Love to Tell the Story

UMH 156

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (in unison):

Holy God, we confess that we do not always love our neighbor. We confess that we have despised others, even to the point of hatred. We confess that we have been hurt by others. We confess that forgiveness and reconciliation at times are just impossible for us. We know that nothing is impossible in You. We come to You, seeking healing and wholeness for us. Help us, whenever possible, to live in peace with others, to seek reconciliation and healing and forgiveness. For Your Son came and lived among us, was betrayed, and denied, abused and put to death. He rose again and came with the message of peace to those who had denied him and abandoned him. May we walk in his ways. Amen.

Moment of Silence

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

For nothing is impossible with God. There is no place you can go, no end of the earth you can run, where God cannot find you. There is nothing on earth or beyond death that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. You are forgiven. You are loved. You are reconciled to God. Go and live with the love of God. **AMEN.**

JOYS AND CONCERNS**PASTORAL PRAYER****THE LORD'S PRAYER (in unison):**

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 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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**OFFERTORY PRAYER (Unison):**

Giving God, we give You thanks and praise for all of Your gifts to us. We know that you are the source of every good thing, light and love come from You. You have created us, and you continue to breathe life into us through the power of Your Holy Spirit. You have given us so much, and it is because we recognize the gifts You have given to us that we now give to the work of Your kingdom. We now dedicate this offering to the work of Your kingdom here on earth. May this collection be used wisely and diligently, that Your love may be known widely. As we dedicate this offering, we offer ourselves too, for these gifts of money are but tokens of ourselves. Take and use us, that our hands may reach out in service, our feet may walk the difficult path of reconciliation, and that our words may be words of peace. For this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

THE EPISTLE LESSON:

ROMANS 15:1-13

A reading from Romans...

1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." 4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed 9 and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name." 10 Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him." 12 And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope." 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Leader: The Word of God
People: Thanks be to God

THE GOSPEL LESSON:

LUKE 10:1-12

Hear the Word of God in the Gospel according to Luke the 10th chapter, beginning with the 1st verse.

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. 5 "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' 6 If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. 8 "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. 9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.' 12 I tell you; it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Leader: The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
People: Praise be to you, Lord Christ

SERMON:

"Equipping Ourselves for the Go"
Pastor Uziel Hernández Martínez

Good morning family of God! It is so good to be together on this fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Today, we begin our worship series based on the book by Robert Schnase, "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations." In this book, we will be reading about practical topics that we should consider as we discern how best to prepared our lives for the times we live in and the times we will find ourselves as the pandemic is over and as we bring justice to black and brown communities in our society.

When we allow the Holy Spirit to push us beyond "come to us" thinking, we begin to imagine "go to them" possibilities for all the places we can carry the grace of God with us to where people already gather. (Schnase, 11)

Let us pray,

Oh, Holy One, we come to you this morning with our minds and hearts open to you. Come to us! And Speak to us now. We want to hear from you. We are gathered here in our different locations because we believe that you have words of life. And those words transform who we are into what you want us to be. May your words resonate in our most inner of our being. May we be open to you in a special way as you lead us. Thank you, Holy Spirit! Push us and take us to the many places you want us to carry and encounter your grace. In the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

It is heartbreaking to say that our community and even our nation has done and continues to do a terrible job at stopping the spread of evil in the world. Just two weeks ago, we had another horrible incident that has shaken our foundations again. We saw on the news and on social media how another black individual was shot in front of his children and how a 17 year-old young white man using a high-caliber weapon killed two people and seriously injured a third in Kenosha, Wisconsin. These acts of violence are starting to become a “norm” around us. Nowadays, it seems that if you are black or a person of color, you could easily lose your life no matter where you go or what you do. You cannot even exercise your right to protest anymore because it can cost your life. The most difficult part of this awful reality is that people in power who benefit from a militarized, hateful and violent state celebrate the continuing of killing of lives of color. Now, young lives blinded by the rhetoric of hate, violence and racism are now taking the streets and hunting for those lives that the white supremacist have deemed not worthy of life. We are crucifying black lives with Christ himself repeatedly on the cross today. May God have mercy on us! We cannot continue in this path.

We need to let the Holy Spirit lead us more than ever. It is time for the church, the body of the resurrected Christ to take a stand, confront the powers that might be and create actions that bring to our nation restoration, reconciliation and reformation in all levels of society. It seems like an incredible and/or impossible job to do. And in fact, it is. But we are followers of One who makes the impossible possible. Thus, the church has a crucial responsibility to begin tackling this tragic reality. And all begins with a single word, love. It begins by the divine categorical imperative, “Love God and Neighbor.” All begins by loving human lives and the ministry that Jesus Christ stand for, died for, and entrusted to us. When I speak of love, I speak of it as the self-given, self-sacrificing acts of care, compassion, and justice for the humanity of those who suffer under the oppression of evil forces. In other words, it is the love that Jesus showed to you and me and those who are poor, oppressed, and marginalized since the beginning of time. It is the power of love that liberates the slaved soul.

Jesus’ divine categorical imperative of “Love God and Neighbor” point us to a praxis (theological contextual practice) of love by nature. For us to grow deeply in love with God and our neighbor, we must exercise the praxis of love to those human lives that our Saviour stand for, die for and resurrected for in the ways we do ministry in our context. Since the time of Jesus, we find in scripture that our Good Shephard taught, prepared, and entrusted his disciples with a praxis of love. Such praxis of love is what we need to restore our world, nation and/or community into full health and into the image of God.

Therefore, we learn this praxis of love by engaging in conversation, reflection, meditation, and action about where we are, where we need to go and who we are before our God in all truth and deed. We can no longer keep ourselves hidden as God calls for us to come out and restore the fallen nature of our current reality. It is time to awake and face this tragic reality head on with faith, hope, and love, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, this month we begin by considering five practices that today more than ever are essential channels for us to be effective in ministry and in our praxis of love. These practices are not necessarily new to us but are contextually re-imagine by Bishop Schnase and churches who have gone through a critical reflection of who they are and where they want to go. We are invited as many Christians as members of the eternal family of God to imagine who we are to be and where we need to go as we explore these topics of “Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-Taking Mission and Service, and Extravagant Generosity,”

In the passages for today, the text point us to two truths, one is that Jesus strategically prepares his disciples to be the extensions of Christ’s body, not to hesitate but trust and believe in Jesus’ instructions; second, that the work of God needs to be grounded in the love and acceptance of others as we were loved and accepted by a loving and merciful God. We go, engage, and do because Christ sent us for a time like this and because in times like this is when we most need to be doing the praxis of love. In times like this is when our actions of love matter most. It is in times like this we need Jesus and the resurrected Christ. And in times like this, Jesus keeps telling us Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. . . . Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near.’

Even before the resurrection, Jesus sent his disciples in pairs to the cities and villages Jesus was intending to go, 72 disciples to be precise. This is interesting because when we think about Jesus sending his disciples, we normally think about the Great Commission after the resurrection; the reading we considered last month. But in this case, we find Jesus accelerating the ministry preparation of his disciples by sending them into the nearby areas. We can observe that Jesus’ urgency came at the height of his ministerial shift to Jerusalem. We can also observe that Jesus wanted to prepare his disciples in the best way possible before his impending death, which he had shared with his disciples in the previous chapter. So, Jesus teaches them in the best and quickest way. Go and do it; he tells them. I believe that the best way to learn is by doing it. And I believe that is the same thing Jesus is telling us today. It is time to do it. It is time to do justice, mercy and love with those who are in needy today. It is time to test in our lives the spiritual and theological muscles and tendons by confronting one of the most difficult times of our history.

The text in Romans help us to remember that the doing is not separated from who we are and what we have experienced with God. It is part of our DNA to be engaged in praxis of love because that is the same way God worked with us. Paul wrote to the Romans to remember the core of ethical and spiritual life of the Christian movement, accepting each other as Christ had accepted them. The movement of Christ now visible in Paul's ministry made possible a new community in the center of the empire that needed to recall the core of their ministry, love for each other and for those who God loved. When we look inside of us and recognized what Christ did for us becomes the key to an effective sharing of the good news. When we remember what Jesus has done for us, we are witnesses of the love of Christ.

The five practices in our book invites us to examine ourselves under these two truths. We are living in times where the process to discern our role in this reality is accelerated for us to listen to the urgency of social and spiritual reform in our nation today. Jesus is sending us to begin this intentional praxis of his love by looking deeply in us. Have we obeyed Jesus' instructions? Have we love others as ourselves and as God love them? The five practices invite us to put our faith in the Holy Spirit of God to open the potential and the possibilities for inner restoration, accountability, and salvation but also for collective salvation of this broken world. We take on these five practices to look within what we have not done. What we need to do. And how to do it. It takes faith. Faith just like the disciples had when Jesus sent them among the wolves. Today, God is not sending us to do something without any risks. We have noticeably big wolves within and around to confront. Wolves that are taking the lives of black lives. Wolves that are destroying the livelihood of God's ecosystem and Kin-dom. For without our black siblings, we cannot be whole and complete in God's Kin-dom. We have wolves that can be threatening to us, but we have Jesus, the one who defeated death and in victory sent us to defeat these wolves.

It is time to stand up, learn and act. It is time to bring down the systems that crucifies black and brown lives on the cross. We cannot continue crucifying them because of economic and political exploitation. We need to love the human beings that God loves. It is our calling, it is our charge as God's body in the world not only for the salvation of those lives who are made poor, oppressed, and marginalized but for the salvation of the church herself. It is time for the church to be the church of the people by taking the identity of the people not of its oppressors. Bishop Schnase mentions, "Jesus welcomed the stranger, but he also became stranger who accepted the welcome of others to offer them God's grace." It is time for us as the church to become strangers to pride, to contentment and to complacency and speak truth to power to the powers that are creating more suffering, more oppression, and more dehumanization.

We go; we prepare; we reflect; we resurrect as the body of Christ ready to be led by "the Holy Spirit to push us beyond 'come to us' thinking, . . . to imagine 'go to them' possibilities for all the places we can carry the grace of God with us to where people already gather." Even if those places are in the streets, in city hall, online or in our own home. May we listen and be prepared for what God is about to do in us. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Amen.

CLOSING HYMN:

Living for Jesus

TFWS 2149

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING:

Pastor: The Spirit of the Lord is upon us! We have been called, we have been anointed, we have been given a task. So, go out from this place into the mission field that is the world. We go carrying Good News to the world: news about freedom from oppression and healing for the afflicted. The time of the Lord's favour is now!

People: Hallelujah! Amen.

GOING FORTH

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Multimedia: Andrea Martínez Cabrera

Liturgist: Andrea Martinez & Milka Rivera

Pianist: Erica Kessler

Administrative Assistant: Milka Rivera

Bulletin: Lora Doll

****PRAYER LIST****

At W. Willows: Mae Foster, Henrietta Day, Art Huenkemeier.

At Home: Nancy O'Leary, Micaela Serrano, Aida Bejesus, Cleo English, Jo Harrington, Carol Waxler, Lee Magnuson, Aylin, Fredy & Eugenio Mejia.

Undergoing Treatment/Rehab: Keith Sodergren, Ken Dahlgren, John Paul, Jonathan Garcia, Maynard Wibom, Rev. Bettye Mixon, Tara & Ismael Arencibia, Jerald Grady, Chuck & Kim Whitmore, Silvia Duran, Pat Nelson, Ellen Dean, David Russ, Pastor Uziel.

BIRTHDAYS

8/31 Teresa Clinkenbeard

8/31 Idan John

9/1 Kelly Nelson

9/2 Jerald Grady

9/3 Megan Jaworowski

9/10 Melissa Wibom

9/12 Beverly Dahlgren

9/12 Taylor Sanders

Joys & Concerns

I just received a phone call from Ellen Dean. Noreen Slade called her to let her know her mother Jo Harrington fell and broke her hip. She had surgery and is resting comfortably at St Anthony Hospital. Please pray for her recovery. As soon as I receive any more news about Jo, I will send out another email.

We hope you will worship with us again.

Due to COVID-19, our physical building and office is closed but our mobile office is open Tuesday – Thursday - 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. You can call 779-444-0369, or email: Centennialumc.rockford@gmail.com if you need any assistance.

When you need to reach Pastor Uziel in the case of emergency, please contact him at 224-723-7003 or - centennialumc.pastor@gmail.com



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