

Centennial United Methodist Church

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Radical Hospitality



September 13, 2020

CENTENNIAL MULTICULTURAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

September 13th, 2020 – 10:00am – Facebook, YouTube, and ZOOM

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Year A

GATHERING

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING PRAYER (in unison):

God of infinite love, we come before you today to worship you. Your love and grace have brought us here. Thank you for being our strong fortress in these times of constant change. Take away our fears and burdens. Give us of your peace to our needy hearts. Send your holy spirit and open our hearts to be sensitive to your Word and to your mission. Equip us to receive others as you have received us. We want to serve you as your hands in feet in the world. We offer ourselves in worship and adoration to you. May we be acceptable to you. We pray in the name of your beloved Son, Jesus. AMEN

CALL TO WORSHIP:

L: There is a space in the pew beside us. There is an empty seat at our table at home.

There is room in our car, on our couch, in our lives.

P: Whom then shall we invite?

L: The doctor, the lawyer, the banker? The mother, the neighbor, the friend? The homeless outcast the poor?

P: Whom then shall we invite?

L: Maybe we are planning an event. Maybe we prefer to dine alone. Maybe, just maybe, we are ready to encounter the kingdom of God.

P: Whom then shall we invite?

HYMN:

Together We Serve

TFWS 2175 (Vs.1,2,4)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (in unison):

Oh Lord, our Savior, we come this morning to confess that we have not been the disciples you invited us to be. Amid the suffering, injustice, and oppression, we have remained silent and inactive. Forgive us and help us to have faith and courage to be your disciples, sent out to do your mission. We put our trust in your guidance and calling. Lead us in the power of your love and your Holy Spirit. That in these times of loss, suffering and uncertainty, we can stand up, be the light in the darkness and bring your living water to those who thirst. Give us today assurance, guidance, and strength. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Moment of Silence

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

Pastor: Rest assured that God has heard our repentance and has forgiven us. And it will guide us on the path of love and kindness towards others.

All: Thanks be to God! We are forgiven, hallelujah. 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):

Blessed are you, God our refuge, Sovereign of the Universe, for you provide for us all that we have. Fill us with the power of your Holy Spirit, that we have confidence and trust as faithful disciples. We bring forth our lives and all that we are to manifest the reality of your reign which has no end. We bring these gifts to do your mission, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, bring medicine to the sick, offer hope to the thirsty and bring friendship to those who sit in jail cells. May they be useful in bringing your kingdom into full view through the ministries of your church, we pray in Christ's name. AMEN.

SPECIAL MUSIC:

Erica Kessler

Rise Up Shepherds
American Spiritual, arr., by Anna Laura Page

BLESSING FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:

DEUTERONOMY 10:12-22

A reading from Deuteronomy...

12 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? 14 To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. 15 Yet the LORD set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. 16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. 20 Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name.

21 He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. 22 Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Leader: The Word of God

People: Thanks be to God

THE GOSPEL LESSON:

MATTHEW 25:31-46

Hear the Word of God in the Gospel according to Matthew the 25th chapter, beginning with the 31st verse.

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Leader: The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

People: Praise be to you, Lord Christ

SERMON:

"Radical Hospitality"

Pastor Uziel Hernández Martínez

Good morning everyone! It is good to be together again. I hope that you had a blessed week. Today, we continue in our theological reflection considering Bishop Schnase book, "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregation." We begin our conversation with a quote from the chapter about "Radical Hospitality."

"Vibrant, fruitful, growing congregations practice Radical Hospitality. Out of genuine love for Christ and for others, they take the initiative to invite, welcome, and include newcomers and help them grow in faith as they become part of the body of Christ." (p. 18)

Let us pray:

Loving God, we gather this morning in Your presence with anticipation, desiring an encounter with You, we are ready to hear from you, the living Word. Open our eyes, ears, and minds to the presence of Your Holy Spirit. May Your Word come to us and embrace, comfort and transform us into your image. May you take root in our hearts and produce an abundant harvest of good words and deeds. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our teacher, and our Lord. Amen.

God defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. God gives food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, invites in the stranger, clothes the naked and visits the sick and those in prison. In other words, God has compassion and cares deeply for those who are poor, marginalized and oppressed. We, as the family of God, are invited and empowered to do the same, to be Christ disciples and be the extensions of Christ' body holistically and in the world today.

Today more than ever on occasions, I have felt forsaken, with an immense sense of loss and alienated from home. The pandemic and other social issues have created us to be separated from each other on many different levels. I have considered myself to be a strong person of faith. But on occasions I confess that my faith has not been as strong as I would like it to be. We are living in abnormal and overwhelming times. The immense pressure can lead us to forget that God is acting and moving in the world in fresh and amazing ways and make us forget that we too are invited to do the same. But it is important to feel the current reality to understand it and respond to it faithfully and with compassion. In addition to this, I feel so sad for our members of our congregation who have not been able to connect to our church services for some time now because of technological challenges. They are always on my mind and prayers. I imagine that it has been even more difficult for them to connect with their home church and spiritual family. May God be with them at this moment.

We need to go to Jesus more than ever with faith and trust that in this time of distress Jesus is there to embrace us with love and grace. Perhaps, the reality we are experiencing is a real image to what a person experiences when he/she is alienated, rejected, and/or sent away by our lack of hospitality. Perhaps, we can learn a little about how to become more intentional about inviting and receiving others by reflecting critically in what we experience as the people of God. And perhaps, this learning can help us to welcome and receive other into our lives with such authentic compassion that people are willing to invite us into their own places of being, as Bishop Schnase puts it in his book. And in that interaction of divine imagination, we can find hope in the resurrected Christ as we are welcome back into his arms.

God has not forsaken us, nor abandoned us, neither is far away from us. As Psalms 27 tell us, "though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will take care of me." I am comforted day after day that no matter the circumstance that our reality can bring to us, it cannot and will not separate us from the love of God and the ministry we do as body of Christ. The ministry we do

is essential because we strive to be the incarnated body of Christ visible as scattered seeds of hope, transformation, and redemption throughout our land. We, the body of Christ, are that visible signs and praxis of love of the “Kin-dom” of God.

God is visible to us as our new “Kin” and thus we are visible to others as we represent God’s new “Kin”. All of us are invited to create with Jesus the “Kin-dom” of God; we participate in the “Kin-dom” of God holistically and inclusively, in some degree that is what it means to practice Radical Hospitality. Radical Hospitality is about sharing about the “Kin-dom” of God to everyone to be of the same “Kin.” God’s “Kin-dom” reflects the existential uniqueness found in Jesus’ death and resurrection to bring newness of life to all who are victims, nameless and without kin. In other words, God is the “Kin” to all. The “Kin-dom” is the metaphor that points to the new reign in Christ that we bring to bear as his disciples. The “Kin-dom” of God bring us to understand better Jesus Christ’s new kin, the people restored by his life, death, and resurrection.¹

We, God’ new kin, have in inherited a blessing and responsibility to continue the legacy of feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, inviting the stranger, clothing the naked, looking after the sick and visiting those in prison. This task is holistic and inclusive in nature and it does not stop on Sunday mornings but goes beyond with us to the entirety of our lives week after week to engage the realities of each other and those who God has call us to serve. It is about living a Christian life with radical hospitality.

The scripture from Deuteronomy is an important one not only to the Israelite community but also for us today. In it, we discovered that from the beginning God has always been on behalf of those who suffered, have been oppressed and/or marginalized. Verse 18 tell us “God defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.” This passage is at the heart of the ancient covenant between the Israelite community and God. And from it we can understand that God’s grace and love was extended to the most vulnerable in the Israelite community.

For the ancient Israelites, the fatherless, widows and foreigners were the most vulnerable because they were not only in some way abandoned and forsaken but, on many occasions, the same community shunned and reject them. But they were not abandoned nor forsaken by God. That is why I believe this text was so essential to that ancient community. To remind the Israelites that the love of God was much bigger, much generous, and much compassionate and included even those who on occasions the community itself had failed to see as siblings because of their contextual and religious biases. It is was a critical reminder that there was room in the “Kin-dom” of God for all.

I believe that today we still have a lot of vulnerable individuals among us outside and inside our church community. And I believe that the church in general on many occasions have abandoned and forsaken vulnerable people in our midst. And I am not only talking about it on the local level but also the general level. The church on many occasions have done a terrible job in practicing radical hospitality to those most vulnerable and needy. The church have not stood

¹ Benjamin Valentin, *In Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology*. ed, Benjamin Valentin (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 179-182.

up for justice (being silent when persons of color are being killed); the church has sustained evil structures of power (not wanting to be challenge neither bothered for social reform within our system); the church has negate the humanity and livelihood of people who are poor, oppressed, marginalized and of color (rejecting LGBTQ+I personhood; participating in racism, sexism, white supremacy, anti-immigrant rhetoric and etc. . .); and the church has struggled to repent for its anti-Christian behavior many times focusing more on economic and political exploitation (the loyalty to political parties for economic and/or political agendas over the humanity of individuals). That is why having a praxis of love and radical hospitality is so important. The praxis of love aligns us with the “Kin-dom” of God. As we learned in the Gospel and in the book, practical hospitality is about feeding the hungry, giving living water to the thirsty, inviting/receiving the stranger and visiting the sick and those in prison. Consequently, it is about having holistic compassion and love for those lives that our Good Savior lived for, died for, and resurrected for.

It is the dream of God that in our practice of faith we make visible God’s vision for the world. God’s vision for the world is that everyone can be part of God’s family and “Kin-dom.” And never negate the humanity and potentiality of each individual person who comes to us and to the church. On many occasions, we have asked ourselves why new people do not come to our church anymore; why new generations avoid coming to the church in general. The answer is closer than we think; it is that we have not shown radical hospitality. Our practice of faith many times is not consistent with our beliefs. Do not get me wrong, the church has done amazing and awesome things on occasions. Everything is not bad news. But I do believe that as a church we have a lot of room to grow and revitalize and reenergize by the Holy Spirit to go beyond the set limits and barriers we have placed own ourselves. It is essential to be relevant and willing to practice radical hospitality with faith and allow room for the Holy Spirit to enter our home and church. Learning to practice radical hospitality in word and deed will help us to consider how best we can be part of God’s transformative endeavors to heal a hurting world today.

Robert Schnase comments that “the church is the presence of Christ in the world, the means by which God knits us into community in order to transform our lives and the lives of those around us. (P. 23). Our response is to be a community that practices radical hospitality. And this is key in living out the vision and mission of Christ for the world and welcome/receive others in the porch of God’s household of grace. God invite us to knit a community that is willing to go the extra mile and is willing to learn amid storms. If Jesus was raised from the death to full life, we too can be raised from the death into full life and health to be the active hands and feet in the world and continue the lineage of faithful Christians. Thus, radical hospitality invites us to break open the barriers that many times we put on ourselves because of fear, uncertainty, and rejection. And take on the transformative good news of Jesus Christ to welcome/receive others as God has received. and be transform by others as God transformed our lives. May we practice radical hospitality to all we meet. Amen.

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING:

Pastor: Now that you are going to get out of this place. Go with the certainty that God has placed kind and sensitive hearts to the needs of others. Go and be the committed disciples that God has entrusted us to be. Now go forth with the blessing of the Father of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Go in Peace.

People: Hallelujah! AMEN.

GOING FORTH**CREDITS:**

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**Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 13th, 2020
Hymns**

Together We Serve - TFWS 2175 (Vs.1,2,4)

1 Together we serve, united by love,
inviting God's world to the glorious feast.
We work and we pray through sorrow and joy,
extending your love to the last and the least.

2 We seek to become a beacon of hope,
a lamp for the heart and a light for the feet.
We learn, year by year, to let love shine through
until we see Christ in each person we meet.

3 We welcome the scarred, the wealthy, the poor,
the busy, the lonely, and all who need care.
We offer a home to those who will come,
our hands quick to help, our hearts ready to dare.

4 Together, by grace, we witness and work,
remembering Jesus, in whom we grow strong.
Together we serve in Spirit and truth,
remembering love is the strength of our song.

Wounded World that Cries for Healing - TFWS 2177

1 Wounded world that cries for healing -
here we hold each other's pain,
wounded systems,
bruised and bleeding bear the load,
the scars of strain;
dollars ration out compassion,
hard decisions rule the day,
Jesus of the healing Spirit,
free us to another way!

2 Through our nation's spent frustration,
through the corridors of stress
may there move a kindlier wisdom
all my feel,
and all may bless;
tax and tithe are for a purpose
shared to shield the poor and weak;
past the symptoms of our sickness
let the voice of justice speak.

3 Honor those whose loving spirit
nurses hope, restores and heals,
towel and basin used in service
like the Christ who comes and kneels;
in the tending,
in the mending
may we see the right and fair,
in our common quest for wholeness
heal each other by our care.

We Are Called - TFWS 2172

1. Come! live in the light! Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in the freedom of the city of God!

Refrain: We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly,
we are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God!

2. Come! Open your heart! Show your mercy to all those in fear! We are called
to be hope for the hopeless so all hatred and blindness will be no more! Refrain

3. Sing! Sing a new song! Sing of that great day when all will be one!
God will reign, and we'll walk with each other as sisters and brothers united in love! Refrain

****PRAYER LIST****

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

At Home: *Micaela Serrano, Aida Bejesus, Cleo English, Carol Waxler, Lee Magnuson, Aylin, Fredy & Eugenio Mejia.*

Undergoing Treatment/Rehab: *Nancy O'Leary, 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, Jo Harrington, Pastor Uziel.*

BIRTHDAYS

9/13 Miriam Castro-Rodriguez

9/14 Miriam Luna

9/15 Ivette Guerrero

9/13 Nikeon Purifoy

Joys & Concerns

Dave Holland gave us an update on Larry Beardsley (the gentleman that has had covid-19 for a few weeks. Dave said he is doing better, but is still on a ventilator. Please continue to pray for him and his family.

A friend of Dave Holland, Kyle Montgomery who is only 37 years old had a brain aneurysm in the Walmart Parking lot. He is in very serious condition. Please pray for him and his family.

Last week Carol Risenhoover, Pastor Uziel and Britta Peterson went down to the church to pass out 57 backpacks for the students going back to school. Christ U Methodist helped contribute to the cause. Carol said it was so good to go back to the church building. We thank them for taking such good care of our students.

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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