



Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Eugene, Oregon

**“At Home”/ Outdoor Worship**

**With the Sacrament of Communion and the Installation  
and Ordination of Elders and Deacons**

***September 20, 2020***

***You may use any bread/cracker and juice you have at  
home. Please take some before you begin to worship to  
prepare the elements for communion.***

Please keep in your prayers:

Arlen and Pat Salthouse and their family upon the death of  
their niece, Samantha.

All those affected by the fires.

*(if you have a prayer request you would like added to  
the At- Home Worship service,  
please email Brooke [office@wpceugene.org](mailto:office@wpceugene.org).)*

***Gathering Around God’s Word***

**Gathering Music—Steve Halberg, piano**

**Welcome**

***Welcome to worship. Whether you are gathered  
together outside at WPC, watching live, watching the  
video, or reading these words, WELCOME. God’s love***

*and grace unites us through all space and time. May you all feel God's love, the Spirit's peace and Christ's welcome surrounding you. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Let us gather together to worship God wherever we are!*

(Please know that to ensure that everyone received a hard copy or emailed copy of this service/sermon prior to Sunday, you have a copy of the sermon I hope to deliver at our outside/distanced in-person worship. As I write this, it is Thursday. Pending the air quality/weather, many things might change. Such is the year 2020! The service will be streamed live —the link will be sent via email on Saturday. )

### Call to Worship

We have gathered in many places to worship God today. As we do so, let us proclaim that This is the day that the Lord has made;

**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

We gather together to praise God and remember all God has done and continues to do for us.

This is the day that the Lord has made;

**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

We remember that God has called each of us by name and God offers abundant grace to us all.

Let us come together to worship God.

This is the day that the Lord has made;

**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

### Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Grant unto us O God, the fullness of your promises. Where we have been weak, grant us your strength; where we have been confused,

grant us your guidance; where we have been distraught, grant us your comfort; where we have been dead, grant us your life. Apart from you, O Lord, we are nothing, in and with you we can do all things. As your word is read and proclaimed to us today, help us be ever mindful of how and where you are calling us. Amen.

## *The Word*

### Scripture Readings

#### *Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7*

But now thus says the Lord,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:  
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
<sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.  
<sup>3</sup> For I am the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.  
I give Egypt as your ransom,  
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.  
<sup>4</sup> Because you are precious in my sight,  
and honored, and I love you,  
I give people in return for you,  
nations in exchange for your life.  
<sup>5</sup> Do not fear, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
and from the west I will gather you;  
<sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, 'Give them up',  
and to the south, 'Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from far away  
and my daughters from the end of the earth—

<sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.'

*New Testament Reading: John 15:1-9*

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Musical Reflection

Steve Halberg, Piano

Sermon "Called"

The Rev. Marta Z Ukropina

What a joy and a blessing it is to be able to gather together here in the church yard for worship today. And we welcome those of you who are joining us from home. This is a special day in the life of our congregation and one that has been in the making for quite some time. Today is the day where we ordain and install new officers to the office of Elder and Deacon—something we usually do around May or June. But, no thanks to the



Coronavirus Pandemic, we had to delay our plans a bit. And as much as all of us have our love/hate relationships with technology— (which perhaps has deepened during the pandemic)—it is so wonderful that because of technology some of you who were unable to be here in person are participating at home. Sure, all of us would much rather be gathered together in the sanctuary with the group of new elders and deacons standing before us. We would all rather be able to participate in the laying on of hands—the part of the service where the hands of other ordained officers are placed on the shoulders or head of the one being ordained. You probably remember what a powerful moment this is each year when we see so many elders and pastors come forward to lay their hands upon those being ordained. In Acts, the laying on of hands is described as both a sign of being called to a specific task and as the physical action that signifies the Holy Spirit passing from apostle to believer (Acts 6:6 and 8:17). Due to distancing, we are not able to do that this morning, but once we can gather again without restriction, we will have a laying on of hands. So, our ordination/installation service will be a bit different this morning. But at this point, I don't know about you, but I will take what I can get. And for today this seems like enough. In fact, for today, it seems more than enough.

The other thing that I just have to point out is what a joy it is to be here—outside! After days and days of unhealthy smoke—seeing God's beautiful creation choked and smothered, I find myself especially grateful to be standing here under the beautiful sky. In these past 6 months of pandemic living, my family and I have rediscovered the simple pleasure of being outside. From daily walks with our dog, to bike rides, hikes, exploring

the beauty all around us, to simply sitting outside and feeling the warm sun upon our skin, to distanced driveway happy hours with neighbors and friends, time outside has helped us in immeasurable ways. Losing that was challenging and difficult and it was especially so as we reflected upon the reason that we lost that. All that smoke and bad air was a horrible reminder of the death and destruction that is plaguing not only places and people near and dear to many of our hearts, but is destroying places and homes throughout the West. Lives have been lost, homes have been destroyed, places have been changed forever. Like many of you, it has been hard to think of much else these past two weeks. My heart is heavy—I feel tugged down by grief and uncertainty. Being able to gather together in this beautiful space to worship God is a reminder that the light is always there in the darkness.

On this day where we ordain and install officers, we often talk about God's call upon our lives. God calls us to service. God has called us to love one another and God has called us to live our lives together: celebrating, mourning, challenging, learning, changing, growing—together. God calls us to tend for the world and all of creation. And God calls us to take care of each other. You all and our community have shown an outpouring of love and support for those affected by the fires. I firmly believe that God is there in the midst of all of that, calling, leading, and equipping. God is there helping us to bear witness to Christ's presence in our hurting world.

Our passage from John points to one of the most beautiful images of the Christian life and love in the Bible. The metaphor Jesus uses here is one that provides a helpful picture for the life of Christian discipleship.

There are many references to vines and vineyards throughout scripture. Just like shepherd imagery, it was an image that made sense to early believers. I think we too can still make sense of this imagery of vines that Jesus uses because we find ourselves living in the midst of wine country. We do not have to drive far to find ourselves surrounded by the beauty of a vineyard. The vines complete with their leaves and fruit whether on a rolling hill or flat land are a beautiful, picturesque sight.

If you look closely, vineyards are made up of vines that have countless branches. It is the vine that nurtures and nourishes the branch. Without the vine, the branch would not survive, but instead would wither and die. It is the vine that enables the branch to bear fruit. If you continue to look even closer, you notice that the branches on the vine are not like the individual smooth branches on say a birch tree, but instead that are gnarled and entangled with one another. Sometimes it is hard to see where one branch begins and the other ends. But, they still manage to produce beautiful fruit.

It is no wonder that Jesus chose this metaphor to describe the life of Christian love and discipleship. The church is to be a place where every person should be welcomed just as they are. They do not have to be the strongest branch, or the most beautiful branch, or the smartest branch, or the oldest branch, or the youngest branch, because the truth of the matter is that all the branches must work together to produce the fruit. The church, young and old, male and female, rich and poor, ordained and lay—ALL are called to show the love of Christ to those in their midst. Everyone is called to love as Christ has loved us. It is in that love that the most beautiful fruit is produced—the fruit that is filled with

God's love—the fruit that shows the world the Truth of the gospel. The call to service in the church is not a call to be the strongest branch on the vine always bearing the most beautiful fruit. In fact, the call to any ministry (elder, deacon, Sunday School teacher, VBS volunteer, choir member, committee member, Zoom group leader, etc) is to recognize that you are not the strongest on the vine. But instead, you are one of the many branches seeking to do the work of Christ in the world. You are not alone.

The men and women being ordained and installed as elders and deacons today accepted the call to be leaders in the church. They did not accept the call to be the strongest branch. They accepted the call to service. In a few minutes, they will make a public confession of faith and answer questions showing their intention to serve the church in those rolls. And I want all of us here today in person or online (especially those of you being ordained and installed) to remember that we are able to serve others and fulfill roles in the church only by the grace of God. Doesn't that take the pressure off? You are not expected to be perfect, but instead you have been called just as you are to share your God given gifts and life with the church in humble service to God.

One of the questions they will answer is:

*Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?*

This question always seems to speak to me, but this year it especially does. This is the year when we have all learned to be flexible. We have all learned that even the best laid plans can be cancelled at a moments notice. We have had real life examples on how we are NOT in charge. Now more than ever, the church needs people

who are ready to serve with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love. We have had to discover new ways to be the church in 2020—imagination has been at the heart of much of what we have been doing. If we can't do things the way we have done them before, what are new things we can try? Every officer and pastor in the church has been faced with this challenge and I for one am so happy this group of elders and deacons have said "yes"! People have told me over the years that they aren't sure if they have much imagination or creativity. I think the key here is to realize that God does! And what God wants is an open mind and heart—ready to hear and try new things. Ready to lead the people in new, unimagined ways. God will use us to do amazing things if we are willing! The other part of that question is most important. Will you pray for the people? As I mentioned in my sermon a few weeks ago—prayer is so important in our lives of faith as it is the way we talk to and listen for God. Prayer, too, is an act of service. These elders and deacons coming to be installed today will be praying for all of you. In turn, we should all be praying for them as they follow God through their service of elder and deacon.

God's calling is not reserved for a particular group of people; elders, deacons or ministers. God has called every single one of us here this morning. John Calvin has best defined call as "the invitation God extends to **all people** to have faith in Jesus Christ." We Presbyterians believe that everyone has been called to minister to one another. We are all called to grow into our identity as children of God. We are all called into lives of discipleship as we spread the love of Christ in the world. The only way we can show that love to others is by

recognizing that love originates from a place outside of us. That love originates from God. All of you, whether here in person, reading this at home, or watching on a screen—all of you are the church. And you are all here to support each other and encourage each other as we walk down our paths of faith together. We are all branches being loved and supported by God's grace so that we can bear the fruit of love to the world.

Today, we are gathered in this place as a Christian community, both in person and online, supporting each other and celebrating the ordination and installation of new elders and deacons. As entwined branches, we recognize the amazing work of God in our lives. God has led us here showing us the beautiful fruit of Christian discipleship and service. Thanks be to God for that amazing and wonderful gift. We can only hope that we take that gift and use it to bring love and change to our hurting and broken world. It is not an easy journey but we can call to mind Isaiah's words:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.”

Thanks be to God, Amen.

### *Responding and the Sealing of God's Word*

#### **Invitation to the Table**

Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! They will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it

to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him. This is the Lord's table. Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared.

## Great Thanksgiving

It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, eternal God, our Creator. You formed us in your image, loved us with an everlasting love, and graced us with gifts for serving. In covenant with your people Israel, you raised us pleaders, judges, monarchs and prophets, to show us your path of truth and nurture us in righteousness. When we were faithless and would not follow, you forgave us and returned us to your way. In the fullness of time, you sent Jesus to be for us the way, the truth and the life. By your Spirit he anointed all would follow him to live a new life in your love.

You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Baptized as one among us, he received the gift of your Spirit, and claimed his calling as a servant of your reign. Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor, and by the power of your Word set people free from all that bound them. He broke open the bread of life for all who were hungry, and upon the hurt and the lost poured out the living waters of your grace. In humble obedience, Jesus went to his death on the cross, and was raised by your power to reign in glory. In the resurrection the gifts of his Spirit were poured out upon your people, that the church might embrace his ministry and live as his body in the world. Remembering all your mighty and merciful acts, we take this bread and this cup from the gifts you have given us and celebrate with joy the redemption won for us in Jesus Christ. Accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving as a living and holy offering of ourselves, that our lives may proclaim the One crucified and risen.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and cup, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the and blood of Christ. By your Spirit unite us with the living Christ and with all who are baptized in his name, that we may be one in ministry in every place. As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world. O God, by water and the Spirit, you have claimed us as your own, and anointed us for your service. Build up the body of Christ in your love, and equip the church for the work of ministry. Make us one body in Christ, where each one's gifts are honored and used for the good of all, where all submit to one another in humility and the bonds of the Spirit. Send us out into the world to do justice, to show mercy, and to walk humbly with you in trust and faith. Give us strength to serve you faithfully until that promised day of resurrection, when with the redeemed of all the ages we will feast with you at your table in glory. Through Christ, all glory and honor are yours, almighty god, with the Holy Spirit in the holy church, now and forever. Amen.

### Words of Institution

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink of it, do this in remembrance of me. Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes. These are the gifts of God for the people of God.



## **Breaking of the Bread & the Communion of the People**

*At this time, we invite you to share communion. If you are alone, take a piece of bread and a sip from the cup as you remember these words:*

*This is the body of Christ broken for you.  
or  
The Bread of Life.*

*This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.  
or  
The Cup of Salvation.*

*If you are with someone in your family, offer the bread/ juice to each other while saying those words.*

*Take some time to pray or sit in silence with God.*

**Communion Music— Steve Halberg, piano**

### **Prayer After Communion**

**God of grace, you renew us at your table with the bread of life. May this food strengthen us in love and help us to serve you in each other. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

### ***The Ordination and Installation of Elders And Deacons***

#### **Elders:**

**Gwen Childs  
John O'Brien  
Jennifer Stanton  
Karen Young  
Serena Strode**

#### **Deacons:**

**Anita Brown  
Judy Coats  
Jane Emmett  
Peggy Mahon  
Carolyn Sinclair  
Tom Stocks  
Teri Yerton**

## ***Sending of God's Word***

### **Charge and Benediction**

**May God the Creator bless you. May God the Son,  
walk with you and may God the Holy Spirit fill your  
lives with love. Go in Peace. Amen.**

**Closing Music:**

**Steve Halberg, piano**