



Westminster Presbyterian Church

Eugene, Oregon

“At Home”/ Outdoor Worship

World Communion Sunday

October 4, 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.

A special welcome to Ursula Damgaard,
WPC's new music director.

Gathering Around God's Word

Gathering Music

Ursula Damgaard, 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!

Call to Worship

We gather from the west to the east,
from the south to the north,
to celebrate the God of peace.
Let us rejoice—
for God is with us.

This God of peace goes before us, showing us
the way, leading us to the Promised Land.
Let us rejoice—
for God is with us.

As we worship from home or here in person.
As we encounter each new day and the joys or
troubles it brings.
Let us rejoice—
for God is with us.

No matter what we face, no matter what trouble
befalls us— at all times:
Let us rejoice—
for God is with us.

Let us worship God with all our hearts, souls,
and minds. Let us pray...

Prayer of the Day

Bless us with discomfort at easy answers,
half-truths and superficial relationships.
Bless us with anger at injustice,
oppression, and exploitation of people.
Bless us with tears to shed
for those who suffer from pain,
rejection, starvation, and war.
Bless us with enough foolishness

to believe that we can make a difference in this world. Amen.

The Word

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Reading: Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my right! You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.

When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent.

Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, "O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!"

You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound.

I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.

New Testament Reading: Romans 15:1-13

We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance

with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name”; and again he says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”; and again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him”; and again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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

Musical Reflection

Ursula Damgaard, Piano

Sermon

**“Hope and Peace”
The Rev. Marta Z Ukropina**

You may recall from an email you received about a month ago or from previous years that the Season of Peace in the PCUSA began on September 6th. It is a 4 week pilgrimage that seeks to deepen the pursuit of peace for congregations, small groups, families and individuals. Our denomination puts forth resources for individuals and congregations to use as they journey through this time and reflect upon our calling to be peacemakers in our world. It is to be a time of encouragement, challenge, inspiration, and education. It culminates in the

celebration of World Communion Sunday which is today and with a special offering called the Peace and Global Witness Offering.

If you have been Presbyterian for a while, you have probably heard of this offering as it has been around since 1980. The offering itself is taken and used to promote the peace of Christ in our world by addressing systems of conflict and injustice. 25% of the offering stays within the local church to further peacemaking in our local community. 25% goes to the mid-body level of the PCUSA and 50% is used all around God's world through the good work of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Last year, 25% of Westminster's offering was used to support the First Place Family Shelter—specifically during the week when WPC hosts the families and provides meals and activities. What a way to sow peace in our community by giving families a safe, peaceful place to stay.

Worldwide, this offering has been used by peacemakers in places like Cameroon, where violence and conflict threaten; it has provided ministries of reconciliation inside prison walls; and has equipped peacemakers seeking to eradicate diseases and their impacts on the most vulnerable.

If you wish to contribute to this offering today, there are special offering envelopes on the tables near the entrances for today's service. And if you are at home, you can mail in a check with Peace Offering in the memo line.

Of course, one of the goals of the season of Peace is for us to find meaningful, life changing ways to spread Christ's peace that lasts beyond the 4 weeks of the season. Peace is something we need to cultivate and reflect upon all the time.

One of the resources put out by the PCUSA this year, with the intention of doing just that, was a 4 week devotion series that explored 4 types of peace which are all very important: peace within ourselves, peace in our relationships, peace in our community and wholistic peace.

I don't know about you, but I for one am finding that it super challenging to find peace in our society and our world right now let alone inner peace. But I also recognize that an absence of inner peace makes it even more challenging to offer, share, and be an agent of peace with others and our world. I have been thinking much about inner peace lately and what I can do to help foster that peace in meaningful, helpful ways.

Our worlds have been turned upside down by the pandemic and by the social/political climate in which we are finding ourselves. In our lives there is always the struggle of balancing all the many responsibilities of life. There are joys and fears; responsibilities and commitments that we face each and every day. As people of faith, we always talk about the importance of keeping God at the center of our lives. Keeping God at the center helps us as we go through life—balancing the joys with the struggles; balancing our responsibilities with self care.

Life in a pandemic especially needs God at the center because many of us are finding that we have to juggle more now than we ever have before. And everyone within our support systems is dealing with the same overwhelming feelings which makes it more challenging for us to draw from our usual places of support. God is the only one who can take it all. God is the only one who can truly offer us a sense of peace and assurance.

No matter what age or stage of life you are in you may be feeling burdened, restless and at times exhausted with all the turmoil happening all around us. Most of the news stories have conflict at their very core, natural disasters keep persisting and causing destruction, people are treating others in appalling ways, parents are trying to balance work with their children's online school schedules and emotional well being. How many of us are finding that by the time we get to the end of the day, we collapse into bed, our minds buzzing with the realization that we have to wake up and start all over again?

Right now it seems that every headline—every story in our world is one of dissension, tragedy, heartache and anxiety—things that choke out peace. Peace is hard, if not impossible to find. Yet, it is now, perhaps, more important than ever. We must seek to find peace within ourselves so we can live into our calling to share the peace of Christ with all.

And really, if we think about it, finding peace within ourselves is a struggle that we always face. The pandemic may help highlight it in different ways, but there are always and will always be things that get in the way of peace. An important practice is reflecting on finding peace and offering peace to others

I personally was drawn to the text from Romans this week. Because when things start to feel so overwhelming, it is comforting to remember that Jesus is there offering us the gift of hope. Another phrase in this text also drew my attention. God is the God of steadfastness and encouragement. God is always with us—supporting us and sustaining us all along the way.

And that is what brought me to the thought that this morning we are going to take a moment to slow down and reflect together. Because sometimes when the world seems to be spinning out of control, we can try to quiet our minds to allow the peace of Christ to break in. At times like this, I often find myself repeating a short word or phrase from scripture. This week, I kept repeating: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

For those of you here today, there is a small painted rock by your feet. On one side is the word *hope* and on the other is the word *peace*.

If you are not here today, I am going to place the extra rocks on the curb of the sidewalk outside of the fellowship hall in the Harlow parking lot—come by and pick one up this week. Or, you can easily participate in this exercise by writing *hope* on one side of a piece of paper and *peace* on another.

These rocks are to serve as a reminder to all that hope and peace are with us always even when they are hard to find. If you are having an especially difficult day, turn it so you can see the word *hope*. How is Christ’s hope with you today?

Spend a moment now thinking of those moments where you see hope. Is it in the joy of children or grandchildren? Is it in the rainbow that appears in the sky? Is it in the silence that comes with an early morning cup of coffee? In the voice of a friend? In the sounds of music? In the words of Scripture? How is Christ’s hope with you today?

As said in the hymn, *Great is Thy Faithfulness*, know that God gives us “strength for today and bright

hope for tomorrow.” God is always with us—his steadfastness and encouragement surrounding us. Tomorrow is always a new day—a new beginning filled with hope. Perhaps after spending a few minutes thinking about Christ’s hope for you, for your loved ones, and for our world, you may feel a peace washing over you. Pray that you may feel that peace.

Now, turn over your rock and see the word: *Peace*. With Christ’s hope always beside you and ahead of you, can you find some peace for this moment? Within that place of peace, can you listen for God? Can you share some peace with our world? Can you envision a place where peace prevails, hope abounds and love wins?

That may seem like a big ask at this time. But I do think we can all rest in the comfort of what Jesus said in John:

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

And later in John, Jesus continues:

“ In me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!”

Recalling these words especially during this time of our lives is a beacon of hope. Christ gives us a peace that surpasses all understanding. It is there with us even when we may be having difficulty feeling it.

For today, that is what I want us to remember. Jesus gives us hope. He does not want us to live in fear or have hearts that are troubled and burdened. And so, we can

find peace for today; hope for today even if it is a small glimmer.

As I mentioned, today is World Communion Sunday—a day where God’s children throughout the world gather at the table to receive the bread of life and the cup of salvation. It’s a bit different this year, considering most people are probably participating from their homes. Perhaps that reminds us even more of how we are united despite our differences. It is a blessing that some of us are able to be outside together here today. It is no wonder that the season of peace in the PCUSA culminates on a day where we come together with people all over the world by meeting at Christ’s table. It is a time of unity and a reminder of the peace that Christ brings. When we come to the table we eat and drink with our risen Lord remembering that we are called by name, united together to give glory to God. It is a holy meal of mystery through which we are reminded of the covenant, equipped for service and given a “foretaste of the heavenly banquet when God will wipe away every tear and swallow up death forever.” (W-3.04 Directory for Worship of the PCUSA).

Jesus came to take on all the sins of this world—an everlasting light in the midst of all the darkness. The truth is that we will face hardships in this life, but because of Christ we have a promise of a peace that we cannot even imagine. It is our calling as disciples to try to find moments that this peace can break into our hurting world. It is our calling to try to be agents of peace—proclaiming Jesus’ counter cultural message. It is our calling to live our lives as people who believe this good news and seek to find glimmers of God’s hope and peace even in the midst of times that are dark and

burdensome. This is no easy calling, but with Christ all things are possible.

Take your rock home and place it somewhere to remember that God's hope and peace are with you. You can use the rock in the same way we did today. It can serve as a visual reminder to help you make reflecting on hope and peace a discipline. Hope and peace are two things that we need now more than ever both in our personal lives and in our lives with others and our world. The peace and hope of Christ are with us all—all the time. Let us pray that through Christ's hope and peace we may become agents of peace in our world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Responding and the Sealing of God's Word

Invitation to the Table

Jesus said: Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Great Thanksgiving

Eternal God, holy and mighty, it is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, and

to worship you in every place where your glory abides. You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. You are always the same and your years will never end. In Christ your grace defeated death and opened the way to eternal life.

You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Revealing your love, Jesus taught those who would hear him, healed those who believed in him, received all who sought him and lifted the burden of their sin. 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.

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 body and blood of Christ. Give us strength to serve you faithfully until the promised day of resurrection, when with the redeemed of all the ages we will feast with you at your table in glory. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, eternal God, now and forever. And now we pray as Jesus taught us, saying:

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.

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 remembering, too, all those around our world who are also meeting at the Table today.

Communion Music— Ursula Damgaard, piano

Prayer After Communion

Loving God, you have given us a share in the one bread and the one cup and made us one with Christ. Help us to bring your salvation and joy to all the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Sending of God's Word

Closing Litany

O Holy God, we know you are with us all the time and in all places. But sometimes we forget. We turn away from you and toward quick fixes that are often fleeting. We find ourselves lost and alone feeling anything but peaceful. Help us to remember to turn to you always seeking your guidance and love.
God of hope:
grant us your peace.

In these days of trouble, fear, and sorrow,
God of hope:
grant us your peace.

In our despair at the violence that seems to fill the world. In our fear about the pandemic and its lasting affects on our health, well-being and economy. In the political turmoil both in our own country and other places throughout your world.
God of hope:
grant us your peace.

In the pain of loss and sorrow. In illness, disease and addiction. In our grieving for shattered dreams and loss of life.
God of hope:
grant us your peace.

Deliver us, O God, from all that divides us. Be with
your children all over your world who are
threatened and living in despair. God of hope:
grant us your peace.

God of hope; **grant us your peace.**
As we seek to love and serve you.

God of hope; **grant us your peace.** Grant us your
peace so that we may become agents of change in
our world.

God of hope; **grant us your peace**
Grant us your peace as we teach our children to love
others and to follow you.

God of hope:
grant us your peace. Grant us your peace as we
welcome the stranger, build community, and invite
others to join us to bring your kingdom to our
hurting world.

God of hope; **grant us your peace.**
God of hope; **grant us your peace.**
God of hope; **grant us your peace.**
Alleluia! Amen.

Charge and Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord turn his face toward you and give you
peace.
May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all from now and forevermore. Amen.

Closing Music:

Ursula Damgaard, piano

