



ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ORDER OF WORSHIP
AUGUST 16, 2020

“No Matter Who You Are
or Where You Are on Life's Journey,
You're Welcome Here”

ORDER OF WORSHIP

*You and your household may want to have a candle
and matches ready for the lighting of candles*

PRELUDE: “Morning Has Broken” Trad. Irish Melody; Lyrics: Eleanor Farjeon
Patty Meyer

WELCOME

We gather here on the bank of the Broad Brook
In the shadow of the great Mount Wantastiquet
In the valley of the rushing Connecticut
to worship and discern together the call of God
to the United Church of Christ for these days,
let us know that we do so on the hunting grounds
and homelands of the Mahican and Penacook people,
as well as the southernmost members of the Abenaki Tribe.
These people used this land since time immemorial
and are still among us in the present.
We offer them our gratitude and respect,
Our repentance and hope in solidarity with them...
It is a Holy Communion we share of life on earth.
Of past and present, of pain and reconciliation

Of mystery and majesty..let us begin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Zoom
Birthdays
Fred

SILENT MEDITATION and THE LIGHTING OF CANDLES

Please join by lighting a candle in your home

INTROIT: “All Will Be Well” Julian of Norwich--music source: unknown; GCC
virtual choir

OPENING SENTENCES: “On Children” Kah

lil Gibran *Ellen Peters*

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said,

Speak to us of Children.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit,
not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you
with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the archer’s hand be for gladness;

For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is
stable.

OPENING HYMN: #327 “I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry” words and
music: John Yivisaker ©1985 *Tony and Margaret Dale Barrand*

PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION¹

¹ Adapted from **Holy Family, Refugee Family, Service Prayers Christmas Season, Year A**, was written by the Rev. Susan A. Blain, Minister for Faith Formation; Curator for Worship and Liturgical Arts, Local Church Ministries. Copyright 2013 Local Church Ministries, Faith Formation Ministry Team, United

Holy One,
You sent Jesus into a world where
children are at risk;
where they, Holy Innocents, suffer,
And their parents, like Rachel, weep for them.

When we forget that
The Holy Family was a poor family:
Lord, have mercy.

When we forget that
The Holy Family was a refugee family:
Christ, have mercy.

When we forget that
The Holy Family was an immigrant family:
Lord, have mercy.

(a moment of silent prayer)

Forgive us, O God,
and lead us to recognize Your Holy Child in the places of greatest need.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Hear the good news: Jesus, savior from sin, is present with us
in the painstaking work of the Reign of God
opening our hearts and our eyes, rebuilding our relationships,
restoring our joy.
Let us celebrate this great grace by offering to one another a sign of
Christ's peace.

ANTHEM: "On Children" Kahlil Gibran music: Sweet Honey in the Rock; sung
by Peter and Mary Alice Amidon; slideshow created by Andy Davis; photos by
Lise Sparrow

CHILDREN'S STORY: "The Little Hummingbird" *adapted from a South American
indigenous story, often told by Wangari Maathai*

PRAYER

CHILDREN'S HYMN: "Calling All the Children Home" words and music: John
McCutcheon, *Andy and Robin Davis singing*

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SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah, verses 9-14 *Margaret Holland*

“Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.
8 They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.”
9 The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.
Who can understand it?
10 “I the Lord search the heart
and examine the mind,
to reward each person according to their conduct,
according to what their deeds deserve.”
11 Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay
are those who gain riches by unjust means.
When their lives are half gone, their riches will desert them,
and in the end they will prove to be fools.
12 A glorious throne, exalted from the beginning,
is the place of our sanctuary.
13 Lord, you are the hope of Israel;
all who forsake you will be put to shame.
Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust
because they have forsaken the Lord,
the spring of living water.
Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed;
save me and I will be saved,
for you are the one I praise.

Matthew 19: 13-14 *Lily Quintero*

13 Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” 15 When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE Hymn: #617
“Write These Words in Our Hearts ...”

SERMON: “Like A Tree Planted by The Water”

At the heart of our faith is the death of Jesus on the cross, and the moment marking that death is the stabbing of his side by a soldier. Water and blood poured from his side, assuring those in charge that he was dead and that he was indeed, human. Water had been so important to his amazing ministry, his Baptism, calling his disciples from the Sea of Galilee, calming the storm, meeting the Samaritan woman at the well... all these occasions brought people to Life at its fullest. In our Scripture today, Jeremiah sets the stage for his coming: "The faithful are like trees planted by the water, those who turn away forsake the 'spring of living water', the Lord God." And, as if to press the point, even after death Jesus pours forth water from his side, an eternal mercy for us all. And, of course, there is also the blood -- the sign of the suffering which is part of all human life, the suffering of poverty, the suffering of loneliness, the suffering of persecution, of illness and of death and of final goodbyes.

It seems odd, then, that we "celebrate" Holy Communion doesn't it? That we celebrate our suffering and the miracle of life itself, at one Holy meal. The bread which gives us life and the wine made from the pummeling of grapes are served at the same sitting. Whether a small or large gathering, joy and suffering sit together at the table. Children alongside grandparents, future and the past sit together, the unknown and our memories are all at one meal, our wild sides and our common sense. The church itself is also a Holy Communion. I was trying to think of stories I could tell today of children of the church, a source of such joy for me. Perhaps, I thought, I could tell of our

amazing trip to St. Croix, organized by CheriAnn Brodhurst to introduce her son's friends to her birthplace, of the building the color of butter, of the slave fort and the tourist shops, of the day we arrived with 16 teenagers to help out at an orphanage, only to realize 4 of our teens had themselves been orphaned—to then pull them aside in sadness for a walk together--only to have them rejoin the group to swim with joy later in the day.

Or of the 13-year-old Guilford boy, whose alcoholic father left him alone for five days in their cabin, the same summer he won the statewide geography bee.

Or of Angel, the 8-year-old Lakota boy who loved to comb our hair and who created a little kingdom with rocks and shells with me on the banks of the Missouri our first year there, and who disappeared the next into his parents' drug abuse at the age of nine.

Of Lea and Michele, ages 14 and 16 when we arrived, who lived with their great-grandmother in the Kaiguchu village in a hut with no water, no animals to milk after their parents were killed in a car accident, and who went on to be a seamstress and accountant...thanks to you.

Or of the three Guilford boys who started the Nigger Hating Racist club down on the Broad Brook, whom I came to know. Cast adrift long before by their

parents, couch surfing and camping when they could, and who never graduated high school.

And then there are the children our church family has fostered and adopted, some for precious years and lost, and some for longer. Some of us have lost children and grandchildren to tragedy, and many of us celebrate others who are musicians and artists, engineers and pioneers in fields we do not even know the names of, teachers and nurses, social workers and film-makers, having ideas and creating possibilities we cannot even imagine.

We come together in pain of loss and suffering, of what could have been and the wonder of what is and is to be, singing together in a Holy Communion.

Later in the service we will sing “Amazing Grace” in Lakota and Kikuyu but before we do, I want to tell you a bit about my learning that hymn in those languages...

On my very first trip to Kenya with Nancy Miller and two of my children, we were in homestays in a village and one night, I asked our hosts to teach us a song. They began to sing “Amazing Grace” and I had to laugh. I struggled at their generosity and at the irony that they would offer a song they thought I would know, and ironic because I was sure they had learned it in a missionary school, perhaps a school in which they had not learned much about their own language or culture. And yet they love that song. They play it with drums and they play it with what looks like a guitar. They make harmony and they sing it

through to the end everywhere we go. Catholics and Pentecostals know about the amazing Grace of God.

In South Dakota they know it too. In fact, there is an empty UCC church near the community center where we stay and, again, as ironic as it may seem, one of my Lakota friends there says she misses church and Amazing Grace. She misses the weekly connection and the comfort of the music which represents the very people who took her from her home as a child, cut her hair and taught her English. I struggled with this too, until I learned the story of the song. Whether they know the story or not, something in it resounds in their souls. I have learned since these encounters, that “Amazing Grace” was written by John Newton. His mother died when he was young. He was captured, pressed into service by slave traders, and went on to have a reputation as an incorrigible slave-trader himself. One night, however, he almost died in a storm. Facing his own mortality and strangely overcome by concern for his prisoners, he soon left the slave trade and went on to become a pastor. He wrote “Amazing Grace” in gratitude for his redemption and began preaching against the very slavery which had imprisoned his life for so long. A few years later, when the prime minister of England appointed a committee to investigate the slave trade, Newton was a key witness. He explained the horrors of the "industry" from the inside out. His compelling testimony helped make the slave

trade - and eventually slavery - illegal². His song and his testimony became one and the same: a call for the Grace of God.

Knowing Newton's story and the truth of his transformation has made the hymn more palatable to me, and if any hymn is the one for colonized people to sing, it might just be the very best possible one. I like to think the amazing Grace of his life has something to do with the Still Speaking God we began naming now decades ago at GCC, the God who continues to pour forth love beyond love when we cannot imagine there is more love to be had.

His amazing Grace also strikes me the same way as our youth who go on our service trips and say the trips change their lives, and that they can't wait to get back to do it all again. The trips are tough and uncomfortable. They demand months of fundraising and preparation. It is not easy crossing cultures or living in tight quarters with people you don't know well, playing with children who puzzle and delight us---and yet something amazing happens.

I think of Derrick teaching a Lakota teen a song one year on the piano, only to come back and see her teaching another child the very same song. I like to think of Nelly crawling in my sleeping bag to get warm the first night of our trip

² https://www.prisonfellowship.org/2017/04/amazing-grace-2/?mwm_id=295776850205&sc=WB1710B10&sc=WB1710B10&gclid=Cj0KCQjwg8n5BRCdARIsALxKb97gux69Rx2c9TotgSICqSzY7trqozLt19ZXdvN5u0uxuHrgRdHVIqwaAlvwEALw_wcB

to New Orleans, and standing by herself on a roof the next day repairing shingles on a house torn apart by Katrina. I like to think of Lily and Margaret and Payton all talking about life and love with girls their age from the Kibera slum and then dancing together as if nothing else mattered. I like to think of the young man who almost committed suicide while we were in La Plant and of the photo I have of him camping at the end of the same summer with friends. I like to think amazing Grace transcends cultures and happens during the Holy Communion of life itself...the presence of pain and possibility together, pain we can't hide from, the pain of poverty and injustice and the possibility of surmounting the impossible, of recognizing centuries of anguish and then dreaming of things new and wonderful.

When Jesus was rebuked by the disciples for laying his hands on the children and praying, He knew their suffering, and He knew the truth of their potential—the Kingdom of Heaven. That, too, was a moment of Holy Communion—with small, suffering children in awe and holy comfort, with Jesus.

Let us pray. Dear God and help us celebrate the still speaking, still comforting still transforming You. Bring comfort to our children, the little ones and the growing ones, the middle schoolers and the teens. Help us remember ourselves in them, the hard times and the wonder, the struggle and the innocence. Help us to welcome and hold them, learn from and support them, to fly like eagles on the wind and nestle in with Your arms around them, safe and full of hope. Amen

ANTHEM: "Amazing Grace" original words by John Newton, music: traditional (this version in English, Lakota and Kikuyu) GCC *Virtual Choir*, slideshow created by Andy Davis, photos by Lise Sparrow



PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE ³ *Nanci Leitch and Brian Remer*

Note: Nanci and Brian, along with Cheri Ann Brodhurst, Tom and Connie Green, Joellen Tarallo, Kathy (Gatto) and John Gurney and Bob and Sara Glennon were some of the first GCC parents to support sending their children to Kenya.

Let Us Pray:

We gather to honor and affirm our life together, our Holy Communion.

We come to support the transformation and the compassion we wish to see in the world.

Silence

This morning we acknowledge the challenges of living together on this one small planet, of holding to faith and of committing to a religion of resurrection and hope.

We celebrate a journey filled with new thoughts and commitments, of discernment and letting go.

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https://www.rexaehuntprogressive.com/prayersaffirmationscollection/prayernontheistic/we_gather_to_honour_and_aff.html, adapted for today

We celebrate the still speaking God, the unfolding of the universe and our ability and possibilities for creating brighter and gentler futures for our communities.

The symbols of life are all around us:

light and noise,

infants and adults,

birds and animals,

colors and movement,

words of goodwill, songs of joy.

May we recognize these symbols as life affirming.

May we seek to renew them everyday.

May we be inspired to share them generously.

Silence

Gathered here today and as we prepare to depart, may we again commit as individuals and as a community to the values and ideals that would contribute to the transformation of this world.

May each of us undertake again the appraisal and joy of living out what is dear to us, and what truly advances and invites compassion, grace, forgiveness, kindness, justice and love to flourish and transform.

May we abide in the assurance that goodness goes on even in our wavering... in our waffling... in our doubts and questions.

May we take hope in the children which are our treasure and our hope for the World yet to come.

This is our prayer.

May it be so.

AMEN.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:

Hymn #278 "Hear our Prayer, Oh Lord..."

THE OFFERTORY

CALL TO OFFERING

*DOXOLOGY

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

CLOSING HYMN: "Hakuna Mungu Kama Yeye" words and music traditional Swahili hymn; arr. Andy Davis; *sung by GCC Choir at St John the Divine service for Wangari Maathai; slideshow created by Andy Davis*

BENEDICTION

THREEFOLD AMEN: Hymn #291

*Please take a moment to enjoy the postlude and then join us at "coffee hour".
The zoom link is below and on the Guilford Community Church homepage:
guilfordchurch.org*

POSTLUDE: "Herr Gott, Dich Ali en Alle Wir" By J.S. Bach *Patty Meyer*