

Fifth Monday of Easter Worship Service

6:30 PM on April 29, 2024

Quiet Time Prayer

God, our church is composed of people like me. We help make it what it is. It will be a church of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, of compassion, charity and mercy if we are filled with these same things. Help me to be what I want my church to be. Amen.

Welcome

Greeting God is good **all the time**. All the time **God is good**.

Question of the Day What is happening at General Conference?

***Hymn** “Cornerstone”

***Call to Worship**

Come to worship God whose love was revealed in Jesus.

We will worship God and sing praises and proclaim good news!

Beloved, we are called to love as God loves us.

We are to love one another as sisters and brothers.

Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

We seek to let God’s love be perfected in us.

God claims you and has high expectations of you.

Christ is the vine; we are the branches.

We will bear fruit when we abide in the vine.

***Prayer of Invocation**

Wondrous Vinegrower, you make all things new in water and Word, feeding your people with love, joy, and peace. Lead us today and every day to the font of new beginnings. Teach us to love what you have commanded and to prune what does not nourish your creation. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us into your love for all the world. Amen.

John 15:1-17 *The Message*

[Jesus said:] “I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

“Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

“I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can’t produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is – when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

“I’ve loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you’ll remain intimately at home in my love. That’s what I’ve done – kept my Father’s commands and made myself at home in his love.

“I’ve told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for our friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I’m no longer calling you servants because servants don’t understand what their

master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.

“You didn't choose me, remember, I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you. But remember the root command: Love one another.”

I John 4:7-21 *The Message*

My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God *is* love – so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about – not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us – perfect love!

This is how we know we're living steadily and deeply in him, and he in us: He's given us life from his life, from his very own Spirit. Also, we've seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that the Father sent his Son as Savior of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God.

God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day – our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life – fear of death, fear of judgment – is one not yet fully formed in love.

We, though, are going to love – love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first.

If anyone boasts, “I love God,” and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won't love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can't see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both.

Response: *The Word of God, for the people of God! Thanks be to God!*

Hymn “Down to the River to Pray”

Time of Prayer

How Is It With Your Soul?

Call to Confession

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess to God and to one another our sins.

Prayer of Confession

God of mercy, we confess that we have not borne the fruit of the Spirit. We have not loved others as you have loved us. We have denied the promises of baptism and cut ourselves off from you. Forgive us, restore us, that we may abide in your love and live out your mercy, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Time of Silent Prayer

Assurance

In baptism God claimed us and joined us to Christ, as branches to a vine.

Believe the promise given to you: in Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

And with Jesus we pray:

The Lord's Prayer

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.

Answer to the Question of the Day What is happening at General Conference?

Time of Offering *Thank you to everyone for your faithful generosity.*

Offering Prayer

Gracious God, when we offer what we have for the sake of others it is a discipline of pruning – letting go of our possessions, our time, even ourselves – to extend the gospel witness into the world. Through your loving Spirit, make our many gifts an offering to meet the needs of the world. Amen.

***Song of Offering** “Cares Chorus”

Message “Real Vine & Real Love” Rev. Joyce Rich

***Commission and Blessing**

Live for God in every moment of every day.

We seek to live as people who know God.

Because we are loved, we dare to love others.

Do not be afraid to witness to your growing faith.

Do not hesitate to show the fruits of abiding in Christ.

We will turn to the perfect love that casts out fear.

We will tell of that love to future generations.

You have been equipped and empowered by love.

God is filling your life with purpose and energy.

We love because God first loved us.

We go out to serve as apostles of Jesus Christ.

Amen. **And Amen.**

***Hymn** “You Are My King/Amazing Love”

Announcements

Prayer for Our Wisconsin Delegates to General Conference *Rev. Jenny Arneson (modified)*
God of Living Hope, as we move through the days of gathering for General Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina, pour out your Holy Spirit to bless the Delegates and Bishops, and bless all those involved in organizing and hosting this worldwide event. During the days of General Conference, may hearts and minds be open to your Spirit moving and to the possibilities for the future of The United Methodist Church. Guide each one making decisions to seek to understand one another with humility, gentleness, and care. Keep us all mindful of doing no harm, doing good, and staying in love with you. Then renew us as a worldwide church in our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Amen.

Read for Next Week: I John 5:1-13; Psalm 98