

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2023

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Come, O people of God, to give thanks and sing.  
All: **We come to celebrate the goodness of God.**  
One: Come, O people of God, to be refreshed and filled.  
All: **We come to entreat the compassion of God.**  
One: Come, O people of God, to search and wonder.  
All: **We come to encounter the mystery of God.**  
Unison: **Come, and with heart, mind, and soul, let us worship the Lord our God.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** “Creator of Mountains” StF 2061 (*Verses 1-3 & 5*)

1. **Creator of mountains, of glaciers and streams,  
Great Splasher of fountains and Dreamer of dreams,  
we gather in wonder and praise for your grace.  
Responding, we ponder our work in this place.**
  
2. **Creator of peoples and races and tribes,  
not bound by church steeples or what myth describes,  
we celebrate now our diversity here,  
in penitence vow to accept and not fear.**
  
3. **Created for caring for all human need,  
we seek to be daring in thought and in deed.  
Turn us from all strife that demeans or divides.  
Reform us for life that empow’rs and abides.**
  
5. **Great God, now we come, our hearts grateful for days  
when faith, like a drum-beat, keeps steady our praise.  
In song and rejoicing hopes stir and arise,  
our spirits now voicing their hymns to the skies.**

*(next page...)*

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## **UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**O God, creator of all things, humbly we confess to you.  
We turn others away even as we celebrate your love for us.  
We build walls that divide rather than bridges that connect.  
We call attention to our differences rather than highlight what we have in common.  
Forgive us, all-embracing God.  
Help us to see you in others.  
Help us to perceive your call to all.  
Help us to share your love with all people, even as we know your love for us.  
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

## **SILENT CONFESSION**

### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

**One:** God does love us. We know this for certain because of Jesus Christ.  
**All:** **In Christ, God seeks the lost and forgives the sinner and loves the world.**  
**One:** So let us hear and believe that good news once again.  
**All:** **For by the grace of God we are loved and accepted, forgiven and restored through Jesus Christ our Lord. Alleluia! Amen.**

## **THE PEACE**

**One:** The peace of Christ be with you.  
**All:** **And also with you.**  
*(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)*

## **THE WORD**

**SCRIPTURE READINGS** Psalm 19  
Romans 14:1-6

PSALM 19 (New Revised Standard Version)  
<sup>1</sup> *The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.*  
(continued...)

2        *Day to day pours forth speech,*  
          *and night to night declares knowledge.*  
3        *There is no speech, nor are there words;*  
          *their voice is not heard;*  
4        *yet their voice goes out through all the earth,*  
          *and their words to the end of the world.*

*In the heavens God has set a tent for the sun,*  
5        *which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,*  
          *and like a strong man runs its course with joy.*  
6        *Its rising is from the end of the heavens,*  
          *and its circuit to the end of them;*  
          *and nothing is hid from its heat.*

7        *The law of the Lord is perfect,*  
          *reviving the soul;*  
          *the decrees of the Lord are sure,*  
          *making wise the simple;*  
8        *the precepts of the Lord are right,*  
          *rejoicing the heart;*  
          *the commandment of the Lord is clear,*  
          *enlightening the eyes;*  
9        *the fear of the Lord is pure,*  
          *enduring forever;*  
          *the ordinances of the Lord are true*  
          *and righteous altogether.*  
10       *More to be desired are they than gold,*  
          *even much fine gold;*  
          *sweeter also than honey,*  
          *and drippings of the honeycomb.*

11       *Moreover by them is your servant warned;*  
          *in keeping them there is great reward.*  
12       *But who can detect their errors?*  
          *Clear me from hidden faults.*  
13       *Keep back your servant also from the insolent;*  
          *do not let them have dominion over me.*  
          *Then I shall be blameless,*  
          *and innocent of great transgression.*

14       *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart*  
          *be acceptable to you,*  
          *O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

ROMANS 14:1-6 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>1</sup> Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. <sup>2</sup> Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

<sup>5</sup> Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. <sup>6</sup> Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

**SERMON** “Singing the Whole Song” by Pastor Bill Vincent

We have here a contradiction in the 19<sup>th</sup> Psalm: the psalm is in conflict with itself. At the very best, it sounds a dissonant chord that grates on our ears.

The first verses affirm all creation manifests God's glory.

The last verses sing in praise of God's law and commandments.

Almost like a game: “Anything you can do, I can do better.”

Different approaches, a different tenor, different notes. One seeking to balance or "correct" the other. “Yes, but...”

The nature lover vs. the law lover.

Can these two different notes be brought together in harmony? reconciled? joined? Or must they always be dissonant, and we be forced to choose between one or the other?

It seems sometimes these different approaches, voices, notes -- different sides -- are vying for dominance ... or even trying to drown out the other.

Like, with fingers in your ears, “La, la, la, I can’t hear you!”

We’ve seen this, heard this concern before with other approaches, other notes.

Like...

-liberal vs. conservative

-urban vs. rural

-black vs. white

-male vs. female

-us vs. them

Can these different notes be brought together in harmony? reconciled? joined? Or must they always be dissonant, and we be forced to choose between one or the other?

An important insight from the Psalm itself:

*"who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults"*

An important caution, warning against the danger of self-deception, which is always a danger for us.

We assert our position, our note, being so sure of our perception. We shout our note so loudly that we cannot hear – or will not listen to? – the notes of others.

But if, in humility, we would listen (even while we sing) – if we would sing our note and not shout it, sing it excellently and not exclusively – we might hear how our note actually harmonizes with others, and theirs with ours.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) put together a Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church several years ago to wrestle with how we might deal with some of these discordant notes, controversial issues facing the church. I knew three of the people on that Task Force; I could see how they might disagree.

One of the most important things to come out of that work and their recommendations was not a list of definitive answers, but a process – dialogue, respect – getting to know "the other" as a person, not a position.

Early on in my ministry, I was at a Presbytery meeting dealing with one of those controversial subjects. I had a question I wanted to ask a colleague, and was not sure how it would be taken. But before I could even ask the question, she assured me, "No, I know you." In the context of that relationship, we could deal with the issue.

What is called for is

not shouting, but talking;  
not name-calling, but listening;  
not posturing, but patience;  
not arrogance, but humility;  
not distance, but relationship.

For too often we work under the mistaken belief that we see the whole picture. "I have all the answers. I see everything, all the ins and outs. I know it all."

Joan Chittister, in her spiritual memoir, notes simply,

**God is greater than religion.** (Called to Question, p.21)

And greater than our minds can conceive.

Yet we are uncomfortable with that.

So we try to whittle God down to our size, to a comfortable level where we can encapsulate and define God in theological formulae and confessional phrases.

All along forgetting that it is God who defines us, not the other way around.

Paul was writing to the Christians in Rome – a church he had not visited. He shared the gospel as he knew it. He knew something of their concerns and issues.

Please note: when he says, "*the weak eat only vegetables,*" he is not against vegetarians. Remember his Jewish heritage regarding clean and unclean foods: some foods were appropriate to eat, and some were not. Here he is speaking to people who are wrestling with a question

about food offered to idols: is it appropriate to eat food offered to an idol when, to some people, that food represents a false god?

*“Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another?”* Paul writes. *“It is before their own lord that they stand or fall.”*

Later on, near the end of his discussion of this topic, he says,

*Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you.* (Romans 15:7)

Is the fact that so-and-so does this, or does that, mean they are weak ... or wrong?

Maybe, maybe not.

Is the fact that one group wants to worship on Saturday while the other worships on Sunday mean that one group is off course?

Maybe, maybe not.

Is the fact that some people focus on one gospel as opposed to the others mean they are out of bounds?

Maybe, maybe not.

But always the guiding principle to our response is love, which

*does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.* (Romans 13:10)

*“Owe no one anything,”* Paul writes, *“except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”* (Romans 13:8)

Love, which *“Welcomes one another, just as Christ has welcomed you.”*

Remember Jesus called a variety of people as his disciples: a fisherman, a tax collector, a religious/political zealot. They would not have gotten along. But Jesus called them together ... to himself.

Jesus accepted the invitation to eat at the house of a Pharisee, and the invitation to eat at the house of a tax collector ... embracing them to himself.

Jesus welcomed the children ... and the men ... and the women.

Are there parameters to this welcome?

Maybe. But they are defined by God, not by us.

Our self-deception difficulty comes into play with our discernment of those parameters. Here is where we needs must exercise humility, and plenty of it.

One of the questions of the Study Catechism of the Presbyterian Church asks,

**How should I treat non-Christians and people of other religions?**

The question really applies to all of us, and all relationships.

In short, the answer to the question is

**I should always welcome and accept these others in a way that honors and reflects the Lord's welcome and acceptance of me.** (Question 52, The Study Catechism, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1998)

Jesus said,

*Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. (Luke 13:29)*

East and West, North and South: the four corners of the globe, i.e., from every direction.

For what defines us is less the direction from which we come and more the direction in which we are going, the *directive* to which we respond ... which is to come here to this table [-- indicate communion table--].

For the way the Lord defines us is here together [--at the communion table--]. "You are invited from East and West and North and South" to join together with the Lord.

We are more than our differences. We are more than our divisions. We are more than our dissonance.

For the Lord is far more than it all.

We come to this table at his invitation. Not our own.

So who are we to seek to nullify his invitation to another?

*"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you."*

So we come to this table.

And as we sit down to enjoy this meal, and as we look across the table, perhaps we see those we dislike, we notice those with whom we disagree, we hear those whose notes seem dissonant to us.

When that happens – when, not if – let us refrain from referring to them by labels, engaging in below-the-belt name-calling, offering snide remarks under our breath.

Let us address them even as we know ourselves to be addressed ... as "children of God."

That's the melody that joins us together: to keep our focus on the One who calls us, the One who claims us, the One who invites us all, even here to this table.

If we can keep that focus – hear his call and echo it in our lives – then that will be music to our Lord's ears.

**\*HYMN "Help Us Accept Each Other" GtG 754**

- 1. Help us accept each other  
as Christ accepted us;  
teach us as sister, brother,  
each person to embrace.  
Be present, Lord, among us  
and bring us to believe  
we are ourselves accepted,  
and meant to love and live.**

*(continued...)*

2. **Teach us, O Lord, your lessons,  
as in our daily life  
we struggle to be human  
and search for hope and faith.  
Teach us to care for people,  
for all, not just for some,  
to love them as we find them  
or as they may become.**
3. **Let your acceptance change us,  
so that we may be moved  
in living situations  
to do the truth in love;  
to practice your acceptance  
until we know by heart  
the table of forgiveness,  
and laughter's healing art.**
4. **Lord, for today's encounters  
with all who are in need,  
who hunger for acceptance,  
for justice and for bread,  
we need new eyes for seeing,  
new hands for holding on:  
renew us with your Spirit;  
Lord, free us; make us one!**

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**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** *(The Apostles' Creed)*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

*(continued...)*



**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*Today's version of the Apostles' Creed is reprinted by permission from Book of Common Worship, copyright 1993 Westminster/John Knox Press.*

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**One:** Savior God...  
**All:** ...hear our prayer.

## **THE EUCHARIST**

### **OFFERING**

*Invitation*

*Reflection* "We Are One, Lord" Joint Choir

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*\*Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**Thank you, O God, for the goodness of life in all its varied forms. We offer you ourselves, heart, mind, and soul, in gratitude for all you have given us and all you have done for us. May our offerings remind us of our commitment to you and your life. Use them, and us, to share your love and embrace your world. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

### **SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

*Invitation to the Lord's Table*

*Prayer of Thanksgiving*

**Leader:** The Lord be with you.  
**People:** **And also with you.**  
**Leader:** Lift up your hearts.  
**People:** **We lift them to the Lord.**  
**Leader:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**People:** **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*(The prayer continues...)*

*The Lord's Prayer* (Traditional)

**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.**

*Breaking of the Bread*

*Communion of the People*

(Please hold each of the elements so that we might partake of them together,  
reflecting our unity in Christ.)

**Sing** "One Bread, One Body" GtG 530

Refrain:

**One bread, one body,  
one Lord of all,  
one cup of blessing which we bless.  
And we, though many,  
throughout the earth,  
we are one body in this one Lord.**

1. **Gentile or Jew,  
servant or free,  
woman or man, no more.**

*Refrain*

2. **Many the gifts,  
many the works,  
one in the Lord of all.**

*Refrain*

3. **Grain for the fields,  
scattered and grown,  
gathered to one, for all.**

*Refrain*

(next page...)

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*Prayer*

## **SENDING**

**\*CLOSING HYMN** “Welcoming God” [Tune 839]

**1. Children are welcome, Christ said one day,  
When the disciples just urged them away.  
Children are welcome at Jesus’ knee:  
God’s own examples for ministry.  
Welcoming God, you open the Way;  
Even the smallest worship and pray,  
Singing with faith and serving you well,  
Your life to know and good news to tell.**

**2. Women are welcome, as are the men;  
Through God’s own Spirit, we’re partners again.  
Partners as prophets, ministers, too:  
No more divided – made one in you.  
Welcoming God, you open the way;  
Those once divided join now to pray,  
Serving at Table, preaching your Word,  
So that your love for all will be heard.**

**3. Outcasts are welcome; sinners are, too,  
Eating with Jesus and being made new:  
Some like Zacchaeus turned right around;  
Wounded and poor ones felt peace profound.  
God of great love, you stand at the door,  
Welcoming people outcast and poor.  
So you forgive and call us to be  
Filled with the joy of your jubilee.**

**4. So may we welcome into our pew  
All who in Jesus are being made new –  
All those who seek him, wanting to know,  
Wanting to love him, wanting to grow.**

*(continued...)*

**Welcoming God, you stand at our door,  
As someone different, outcast or poor.  
With longing eyes, Lord Jesus, you search.  
May we all welcome you in your church.**

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**\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...  
All: ...Amen.

**POSTLUDE**

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This week:

Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Pacific Session meeting – 1:00 pm  
Union Session meeting – 7:00 pm

Pastor Bill will be on Study Leave and Vacation October 6<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>.  
Rev. Kurt Calkins will preach for worship next Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup>.  
Rev. Jay Summerville will preach for worship on Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>.