

Straight from the "Heart"

May 29, 2022

 HARTLAND

Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve God.

Preservice Music by Donna Allmond and Kathy Novak (pictured).

Welcome Today we honor Aldersgate Day (May 24, 1738), the day John Wesley described a “strangely warmed heart” during a worship meeting at Aldersgate Street, which was a turning point in his life and touchstone of what would become the Methodist movement. We also honor the Ascension, the day the resurrected Christ ascended to heaven in preparation of sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (next Sunday), but we will be touching on that this week as well. And it is also Memorial Sunday. We will begin by honoring that day...



Call to Worship

Lay Reader: God kindles within a flame of sacred love which leaps and runs in an inextinguishable blaze. Come and be warmed by his fires and refreshed by his grace, that our devotion to live in his love will increase throughout the land, that God's will may fully and effectively be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Inspired by from UM Book of Worship: Aldersgate Day

It was the Spirit's fire in John Wesley's heart that inspired him to ambitiously pursue ministry to those in need and transformation within and beyond his nation. Our first song is a prayer that God will also work his grace in this country, uniting us with noble values such as mercy and self-sacrifice and willingness to move from away flaws and toward a self-disciplined virtue, without which freedom cannot thrive. Let's sing.

^ **Music**

America the Beautiful

O beautiful for spacious skies, For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain!
America! America! God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!

O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved and mercy more than life!

America! America! May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness, and every gain divine!

O beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam undimmed by human tears!

America! America! God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law!

Memorial Day Responsive Canticle of Remembrance

Lay Reader: The song honors those who offered their lives in the fight for liberty and mercy. The Wisdom of Solomon reinforces that the deaths of those who do right are not a sign of defeat, are not vain or meaningless, and that death is not the final word. (L: Lay Reader, **C: Congregation**)

L: Those who do right are protected in God's hand.

C: No torment shall touch them.

L: To those who don't know any better, it seems that their death is a terrible evil, and their going forth from us -- their utter destruction.

C: But in reality, they are at peace.

L: It may look to as if they have suffered punishment,

C: but they have the confident hope of living forever.

L: Their sufferings were minor compared with the abundant blessings they will receive. As gold in the furnace, God tested them and found them worthy to be with him [and] took them to himself, just as he accepts the sacrifices which his worshipers burn on the altar.

C: When God comes to reward the righteous, the godly will shine and burst forth like fiery sparks among dry straw.

L: They will rule over nations and peoples, and the LORD will be their King forever. Those who have put their trust in God will understand the truth of his ways. Those who are faithful will always live with him in love,

C: For he is kind. His grace and mercy and care are with his chosen ones.

(Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9 (NAB RE, CEB, GNT))

Prayers

Almighty God, your chosen ones, living and dead, are always before you. We are your people. Our time on this earth is relatively short. We give thanks for all those through whom you have blessed our journey. For those lives that have empowered us, whose influence is a healing grace. For dear friends and family members whose presence is no longer with us, but whose love remains forever, we lift thankful hearts. For teachers and companions of our childhood and youth, for the members of our household of faith who worship you now in heaven -- we are grateful. For those who have given their lives for the sake of others, we honor their sacrifice. We hold all these and more in our remembrance, knowing they are with you in that city where there is no night. May we follow their example in working for a world where labor is rewarded, fear dispelled, and the nations made one. (Adapted from UM Book of Worship, John Hunter, Scotland, 20th century, alt.) Lord, we pray our thoughts are pleasing to you as we rejoice in your presence with us. You take up residence with us through your gathered people. Look upon your people and hear the requests of our hearts. **Praises and Petitions** Today we again remember * Ukraine, * and we pray against the continued senseless violence caused by hate, * for man named Chuck who has broken hip surgery, * for Terri's friend Carol's sister Janet -- * We pray for the safety of Mark, who is in Kyiv to help with humanitarian aid. * We also add Ken Tomasheski, the father of Terri's friend Kara, who has double pneumonia, * Janice with stage 1 lung cancer, * and for Pat Schleh's brother Herb who has lung cancer and undergoing tests. * There are others on our hearts and minds, and we pray for them as well, knowing that you will accomplish your purposes in your time. We know this because the wisdom of your works is shown throughout the earth. Nature is full of animals on land and sea. They all look to you for their seasonal food. You give, they gather, and they are filled with good things. The cycles of seasons, of life and death, reveal how your Spirit creates and renews the face of the earth. In a similar way, the seasons of the Christian year with its fasts and feasts and additional special days from our culture invite us to remember the lives of your saints, and how you give and gather and fill us with good things. As long as we are able, we will honor your great works by the living out the prayer you taught us to pray. **LORD'S PRAYER**

Introduction to and Bible Reading

Lay Reader: There is a Jewish holy day called Shavu'ot (shaw-voo-awt). It literally means “weeks” and is often referred to as the Festival of Weeks, and is occasionally called Pentecost. The only real connection between it and Christian Pentecost is that they both count from Passover or Easter and so are on essentially the same day. The climax of the Jewish holy day celebrates God giving of the Torah through Moses on Mount Sinai. Hear now some high-lights of that event.



Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances. Then all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.” Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain... He sent young Israelite men who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of young bulls to the Lord.... He took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people, and they said, “All that the Lord has said we will do, and we will be obedient.” ... So Moses... said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to Me to the mountain and stay there, and I will give you the stone tablets with law and the commandments which I have written, so that you may teach them.” Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain... Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up to the mountain.

Exodus 24:3,4a,5,7,8b,12,15-17a, 18 (MEV)

Music Leader: Just as the Torah was given to teach truth to God’s people of the Old Testament, and the Holy Spirit was given to God’s people of the New Testament, we pray that like then, the Spirit will come teach us the truth he wants to share with his world.

Music vv 1,3,4 O Spirit of the Living God

O Spirit of the living God, thou light and fire divine,
 descend upon thy church once more, and make it truly thine.
 Fill it with love and joy and power, with righteousness and peace;
 till Christ shall dwell in human hearts, and sin and sorrow cease.

Teach us to utter living words of truth which all may hear,
 the language all may understand when love speaks loud and clear;
 till every age and race and clime shall blend their creeds in one,
 and earth shall form one family by whom thy will is done.

So shall we know the power of Christ who came this world to save;
 so shall we rise with him to life which soars beyond the grave;
 and earth shall win true holiness, which makes thy children whole;
 till, perfected by thee, we reach creation's glorious goal!

Sermon Accepted: Lydia

Peter was accepted and reassigned to ministry despite failures in faithfulness. Saul was accepted as a formidable missionary to the Gentiles for Christ despite having been a furious menace to Christ followers. The woman at the well was accepted despite an opposing racial and religious heritage. Cornelius and Peter envisioned and experienced the same Spirit and the same Lord, and Gentiles were unofficially accepted as a part of the church (without having to become Jews) despite what were normally incompatible world views. Christianity was now spreading in leaps and bounds because persecution was scattering them -- and wherever they scattered they boldly gave the good news of gracious salvation freely offered to those who repent of their sins and communities were being transformed.

Now we pick up the story. (See Acts 16:1-5), Saul (now referred to as Paul) has some success in Derbe and Lystra (List-ra) and picks up Timothy who eventually become one of his important trainees. We aren't told how, but the Holy Spirit kept blocking them from going where they had planned, and they ended up in Troas (Trow-ahhs) where Luke joins the missionary team. One night in that place, Paul has a vision of a man in Macedonia begging him to come and help them." Paul concluded God was calling them to preach the gospel there, so they immediately prepared for the journey. (See Acts 16:9-10)

The takeaway from this is not that Paul's original plans were wrong but that he was directed to a different timing and strategy. Because of this switch, they

encountered some central cities (which in hindsight, some scholars deduce that this was a more effective strategy is spreading the gospel more quickly because it allowed the gospel to take on a life and movement on its own in those cities while Paul could continue on his missionary journeys. (See Acts 16:11-12)

From Troas, they sailed to Samothrace (Sam-oh-thrase) -- a towering mountain island rising 5,000 feet above the sea, and the next day to Neapolis (knee-app-oh-lis), the seaport for Philippi 10 miles away. Philippi was a leading city in Macedonia, a proud and important tax-free, self-governing Roman colony, and in which Roman soldiers had settled.

Paul's normal strategy was to first preach to the Jews. But it seems the Jewish population was small for they didn't have the required 10 men to organize a synagogue. While they stayed in the city a couple days, they did hear of a place outside the city (the assumption is they weren't allowed to meet within its borders) that was an unofficial meeting place where some Jewish women gathered for Sabbath prayers. It was near a river so they could also practice the Jewish water purification rituals. Paul, Luke, Timothy and the rest of their group joined their meeting and told them the story of Jesus. At the meeting was at least one a successful Gentile businesswoman from Thyatira (thigh-ah-tie-rah) and worshiper of God. She is referred to as Lydia, but the literal translation is "the Lydian woman". (See Acts 16:13-14a) Thyatira was a city in western Turkey, founded as Pelopia in the ancient kingdom of Lydia, renamed when it became a Macedonian colony. It was known for its manufacture and use of purple dyes, of which this woman was a dealer. She was an Asian transplant to Europe, and the Lord opened her heart to be the first European to become Christian. (Acts 16:14b)

This story demonstrates God's eagerness to accept and work in ever-expanding types of cultures and peoples, and what can happen when people heed the Spirit's hinderings and leadings. A businessperson from a culture foreign to the rest was accepted and welcomed to worship in a prayer meeting. She was already seeking, she just needed the space and time, the opportunity to learn in a safe place. By the positive, encouraging testimony of missionaries, whom this group also accepted and welcomed; Lydia found the joy of Jesus Christ, and immediately went about the business of Christian ministry. As a practical expression of her new faith -- she pressed her hospitality and material support on the missionaries. (Acts 16:15) Nothing dramatic or earth shattering -- in her conversion or in her ministry - - but that makes it no less valid or important. In fact, most scholars describe Paul's

relationship with the Philippian church that was born that day as one of exceptional closeness and intimate warmth, much more so than with any other church he founded or worked with. Because of our current global culture, we may not think realize how big a deal it was to be crossing national and cultural and faith boundaries.

And so it is, in the ordinary living and seeking of God and fellowship with one another that we suddenly (or gradually) realize that through some comment, some song, some friendly connection - that Christ has given his Spirit to us and we receive him to live and reign in our heart. He becomes our highest priority — and his joy floods our soul and spills out in how we live.

In the 1860s, as the story goes, prospectors set out from Bannack, Montana in search of gold. They went through many hardships. Some in their crew died or gave up. They were overtaken by thieves who took all their good horses, leaving them with only a few limping ponies. These thieves threatened to kill them if they did not return to Bannock to stay.

The defeated prospectors began to make their way back to Bannack. One evening as they set up camp for the night, one of the men casually picked up a little stone from the creek bed. He called to his buddy for a hammer and upon cracking the rock, he said, "It looks as though there may be gold here!" The two of them panned gold the rest of the afternoon and managed to realize 12 dollars' worth. (around 350 dollars by today's standards – actually about a decade ago) The next day their whole group panned and realized 50 dollars, (that'd be about 1,500 dollars today). Not bad for a day's work. How many of us wouldn't mind a day's income like that?

As they made their way back to Bannack, they vowed not to breathe a word concerning their treasure. They secretly re-equipped themselves with supplies for another trip. When they left, 300 men followed them. No one had told. But their step, their actions, and their beaming faces betrayed the secret.

If we love Christ, then our lives, our actions, sometimes even our faces, will reveal the treasure of Christ's Spirit within. Granted, Christians have many of the same problems as everyone else -- and it is not always easy to beam. That is understandable. Nevertheless, God's gift of the Spirit, of Christ in our hearts, is not meant to be



limited to a select few or kept secret. He commissions us to reveal Christ's life within us and that he can live in all people everywhere. As you are able, let his love and grace flow through you, that he may be seen in your lives. As you are able, let him be seen in your lives by the power of God's Spirit, his life-giving water falling on, in and through us.

So let's talk about the Pentecost Season. We mentioned the Festival of Weeks. It begins with Passover, when God bought his people's freedom from physical slavery in Egypt. It is quickly followed by a Festival of First Fruits when his people joyfully give thanks for God's provision for the harvest and climaxes with Shavu'ot and God giving the Torah through Moses, moving them into a blood covenant with God and the making of a nation. The First Fruits and Shavu'ot are connected by an important tradition call the counting of the Omer (o-mare). I guess it is kind of like when during Advent we count down the days down toward Christmas -- helping build the anticipation of the arrival of the day we celebrate Christ's birth. Each day a blessing is recited -- sometimes a prayer for God's salvation and blessing to shine on them and on all, and then the nations to the farthest corners of the earth will honor God. Following the blessing, the count of the day is named... This count tightly links Passover to the giving of the Law. Jewish websites describe it this way: Passover frees us *physically* from bondage (to Egyptian slavery] but the giving of the Torah redeemed us *spiritually* from our bondage to idolatry and immorality. It reminds us that redemption from slavery is not complete until the Torah is given. (*emphasis added*) The sages point out that his people are to be *receiving* the Torah every day, so what makes the day significant is that it is the initial *giving* of the Torah.

Technically, the observations I just described have no connection with the Christian Easter Season other than the seasons run parallel on the calendar. And yet, it is hard not to draw parallels. Our season begins with Easter, when God bought his people's freedom from sin and death by raising Jesus from physical death. It is quickly followed by Bright Sunday when people joyfully give thanks and spreads the news for God's spiritual provision and climaxes with Pentecost and God giving the Spirit through Jesus, ratifying the blood covenant established by Jesus and the making of his kingdom. Unfortunately, we lack a formal tradition of counting Easter to Pentecost, so to two events are not as closely linked, but maybe it should, to remind us that our salvation gained by Jesus on the cross is not fully complete until the Spirit fills us and begins the work of restoration within us. We

are to be receiving the Spirit every day (Ephesians 5:18b), so what makes Pentecost so significant is that it is the initial giving of the Spirit, and like the Torah, the Spirit is there to guide and instruct us in God's truth (John 16:13) that shall set us free if we hold to Jesus' teachings (John 8:31-32). It is this "always receiving" that brought the ladies and Lydia to a prayer meeting by that river, and why we gather at every opportunity -- to remember and honor God and his works through the feasts and fasts, the festivals and disciplines, as well as in ordinary days and times, because our faith, like the Jews, is wrapped up in the living out in word and action an active blood covenant with our Creator God, and Jesus established a means for us to remember that covenant.

Communion

Invitation He invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another. Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

Confession and Assurance

Oh merciful God, we confess that we do not always recognize you as the source of our essence, our lives, or your role in our accomplishments. Too often, we are far more ready to complain when things go wrong than to gratefully praise when things go right. We have fed our bodies a rich diet while neglecting to feed our souls. Power and wealth have assumed greater importance to us than sensitivity and service. We have not taken advantage of opportunities you have created for us for living encounters with the persons you have called us to love. Forgive us, compassionate Redeemer, and grant us the opportunity to start again. Keep us from repeating past mistakes and from new evils that could mislead or destroy.

Help us to hear your voice in the wind, remembering your breath gives life to all. We come before you as your children, small and weak, needing your strength and wisdom. Let us walk in beauty, respecting our environment, beholding nature, and learning life's great lessons. Grant us strength not to be superior, but to live in harmony with others, with ourselves, and with all of creation, always ready to be in your presence because we have been forgiven and freed for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. So as we prepare to be nourished from Communion, let's pray Jesus will feed us and fill us with Spirit and love.

Music***Spirit Song***

O let the Son of God enfold you with his Spirit and his love.

Let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.

O let him have the things that hold you, and his Spirit like a dove
will descend upon your life and make you whole.

Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.

Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.

O come and sing this song with gladness as your hearts are filled with joy.

Lift your hands in sweet surrender to his name.

O give him all your tears and sadness; give him all your years of pain,
and you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.

Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.

Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.

The Great Thanksgiving (Bold Print is the Congregation)

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. In the beginning your Spirit moved over the face of the waters. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, Your Spirit came upon prophets and teachers, anointing them to speak your Word. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. At his baptism in the Jordan your Spirit descended upon him and declared him to be your beloved Son. With your Spirit upon him he turned away the temptations of sin. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed

the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, baptizing us with the Holy Spirit and with fire, as on the Day of Pentecost.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood and empowered by the gifts of the Spirit. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, showing the fruit of the Spirit until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Bread and Cup

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ. The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [Take and eat].

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [Take and Drink].

Prayer: Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Open our hearts that we may receive you again and again. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

So as the Spirit of truth came and continues to come and spread throughout the world, let us “rise from the table” and share his love wherever we go... Let’s sing

Music (vv 1,2,3) *Now Let Us From This Table Rise*
to tune of Jesus Shall Reign

Now let us from this table rise renewed in body, mind, and soul;
with Christ we die and live again, his selfless love has made us whole.

With minds alert, upheld by grace to spread the Word in speech and deed,
we follow in the steps of Christ, at one with all in hope and need.

To fill each human house with love, it is the sacrament of care;
the work that Christ began to do we humbly pledge ourselves to share.

Blessing

Now may God, whose love -- like rolling waves -- is never ceasing -- always refreshing -- bathe you as in clear, calm, living streams of water. May his gracious forgiveness fall over you -- so that the borders of failure, of opposition, of racial and religious heritage, or incompatible world views, or of national ancestry-- may be washed away and you are renewed in the tides of his mercy. **Amen.**