

Straight from the "Hart"

February 5, 2023



Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve

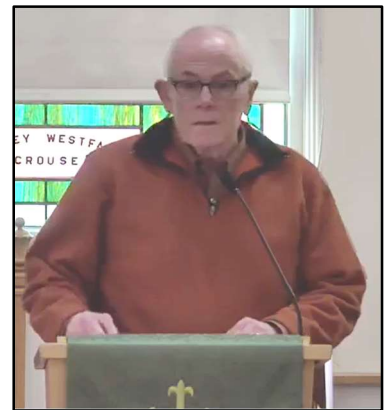
Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are participating in today's time of worship by reading this service script.

Opening Prayer Heavenly Father, we have gathered to be set free, or at least get a reprieve from what weighs us down -- and to discover a fresh spirit of your abundant life through Jesus Christ. As part of living honorably according to your will, we participate in this simple act of giving ourselves to you. Accept our dedication to live lives that please you. Amen. Please remain standing for the call to worship and first song.

Call to Worship

Lay Reader: We live in a variety of towns. We work and play at different tasks in different buildings. We wear different styles and have different interests and preferences. We bring different natural talents and spiritual gifts. Yet, as we gather today, we join together as one family with the Risen Christ in true communion with God and with each other. Let's worship.

ad © 2011 from Mary Frances McClure



Music Therefore, let's begin by praying through song that God will bless us as we meet with him and with each other.

Lord, We Come to Ask Your Blessing

Words: Fred Pratt Green Music: W. Daniel Landes Words © 1989 Hope Publishing Co,
© 1997 Abingdon Press, adim by the Copyright Co.

Lord, we come to ask your blessing on the love that makes us one;
here, as Christians, to acknowledge you are Lord, and you alone.

God of love, unless you bless us how can we each other bless?
Only as you live within us is there depth of happiness.

May our loving be a sharing of the gifts we each possess;
may no failure of forbearance turn our love to bitterness.

Lord, we come to ask your blessing in the presence of our friends:
Grant us joy that blesses others, grant us love that never ends.

Theme

Our image today in a combination of trying to convey the aspirations of big dreams – and overlooking the big picture of where those dreams might take place. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem for the final time and it doesn't say he was overlooking the city, but



images of the place certainly must have been in his mind as he sadly and longingly said of the city with a broken heart: “How many times I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me!” (Luke 13:34 GNT) And now he was heading there to fulfill his destiny of defeating evil by dying for them and for all.

Destiny and (at least the willingness to) sacrifice often go hand in hand. Even TV writers get it. In futuristic series that was building up to cosmic battle between good and evil, an inquisitor arrives to test people to see if they were truly the chosen ones for this battle. A “priestess” is being interviewed and a soldier enters to interrupt. So the inquisitor asks the soldier, “How far will you go, what will you risk, what will you sacrifice, are you willing to die alone, friendless, deserted by all -- because that may be required? What about friends, and family, and honor, and truth, and right, and wrong -- what about the future, about fate, about sin, about hell?”

The priestess interrupts, saying she is the one who is being tested, not him. So the inquisitor turns to her: “Ah, a mutual admiration and sacrificial society.” [I think that’s a pretty good description of a healthy church 😊] “And what is this soldier to you? You would trade your life for his -- I thought you had a destiny -- is that destiny not worth his one life?”

She replies, “If I fall, another will take my place, and then another, and then another...”

“But what about your great cause?”

“This is my cause: Life! One life or a billion, it is all the same.”

“Then you make the sacrifice willingly?” “Yes!”

“No fame, no armies or banners or cities to celebrate your name? You will die alone? and unremarked? and forgotten?”

She says, “This body is only a shell. You cannot touch me, you cannot harm me. I'm not afraid.” [Pause]

How do you know the chosen ones? Jesus said, “No greater love hath a man than this, that he lay down his life for his brother (and sister)”, and I believe the implication is also not for millions, not for glory, not for fame, but for one person, in the dark, where no one will ever know or see. Jesus died for all of us, but he also died for each of us. Theologians, or at least some theologians do say that even if you were the only one that needed someone to die for you to be saved, Jesus would have willingly done it, eagerly...

This is love, says John, the disciple who described himself as “the one Jesus loved” This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.... This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. There is a song – it is an echo song (what I do you do right after me):

(Pastor, **bold** - Congregation echos, **ALL CAPS - PASTOR AND CONG. together**)

♪ This is how I know **This is how I know**

This is how I know **This is how I know**

What love is **what love is** Jesus Christ **Jesus Christ**

lay down his life **lay down his life**

for us **for us for us for us, FOR US**

(Repeat)

And if you learn that song, you have learned 1 John 3:16. Which I think is ironic because kind of cool because it so closely echoes John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. And after he says this in 1 John, he goes right on to give one example of how we aspire to the destiny of loving as he loved]; He says, “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

(1 John 4:10-11, 3:16b-18)

Intro to and Responsive Reading (L – Lay Reader **C – Congregation**)

L: Paul writes to the Romans with one of his descriptions of what it means to love as Jesus as he loved us.

L: Love others well. Don't just pretend to love others, love authentically.

C: Our love must be sincere.

L: Hate what is evil. Pursue what is good as if your life depends upon it.

C: We will cling tightly to what is good.

L: Never lack zeal. Keep your spirit on fire, bubbling up and boiling over.

C: We will serve the Lord enthusiastically.

L: Do not forget to rejoice in confident hope. Patiently hold on through hard times. Devote yourselves to prayer. When God's people are in need, be ready to share what you have. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

C: We will take every opportunity to open our lives and homes to others.

L: If people mistreat or malign you, bless them.

C: We will always speak blessings, not curses.

L: If some celebrate, join in the celebration. If others are weeping, mourn with them. Work toward unity.

C: We will live in harmony with one another.

L: Avoid thinking you are better than others or wiser than the rest.

C: We will embrace ordinary people and ordinary tasks. We will not be conceited.

L: Never pay back evil with more evil. Be careful to try and do things in such a way that everyone can see that you are honorable.

C: If it is possible, we will do everything within our power to live in peace with all people.

L: Do not take revenge...

C: We will overpower evil by doing good.

Based on selections from Romans 12:9-21 (VOICE, NLT, NIV)

Music Paul spells out what it means to love as Jesus loved – and the hymnwriter reminds us that these actions are still needed today. Let's sing.

Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service

Words: Albert F. Bayly, 1961

Music: Attr. to B.F. White, 1844; harm. by Ronald A. Nelson, 1978

Words: © 1961 Oxford Uni Press, harm., © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship

- 1 Lord, whose love in humble service bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken, offered mercy's perfect deed:
we, your servants, bring the worship not of voice alone, but heart,
consecrating to your purpose every gift that you impart.

2 Still your children wander homeless; still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom; still in grief we mourn our dead.
As, O Lord, your deep compassion healed the sick and freed the soul,
use the love your Spirit kindles still to save and make us whole.

3 As we worship, grant us vision, till your love's revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to tireless striving your abundant life to share.

4 Called by worship to your service, forth in your dear name we go,
to the child, the youth, the aged, love in living deeds to show;
hope and health, good will and comfort, counsel, aid and peace we give,
that your servants, Lord, in freedom may your mercy know and live.

Music It said our eyes are quickened – made alive – made aware to grasp the needs around us, so that we can bring hope and health and good will and comfort and counsel aid and peace to those in need -- This is not something each of us can do all by ourselves. We need each other – put together by the love of God to carry on his mission in this world. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing.

Bind Us Together

Words: Bob Gillman Music: Bob Gillman © 1977 Kingsway's Thank You Music

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together
with cords that cannot be broken.
Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord,
bind us together in love---

There is only one God, there is only one King;
There is only one body---, that is why we sing.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together
with cords that cannot be broken.
Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord,
bind us together in love---

Pastor's Prayer Loving God, we praise you with all our hearts in song, in prayer, in gratitude for your presence, for your unfailing love and steady faithfulness. You answer when we call to you and that gives us joy to face the good days and courage to face the tough ones. We celebrate all the wonderful opportunities of life that you give to us, and are grateful to know your powerful ways and works.

You are rightly exalted, high and lifted up above the heavens, yet you come close

to pay compassionate attention to the humble. You preserve our lives in the midst of trouble. You protect us and save us, because your love endures forever. You created us. You do not abandon us, for we are the work of hands.

Praises and Petitions Therefore, we think about those needs among us, * We pray for Gar Lemon today as he is in Ann Arbor with a bad eye infection, * Jeff Gordonier requests prayers for his brother Jay who is recovering from surgery, * Cheri Holt requests prayers for her daughter-in-law's family as her aunt just died in her late 50s. * and we continue to pray for 5 year old Brantley Call, who has now moved to a Children's hospital, * for the Preiss's and Jan Martin as they travel, * for Jan's brother Reese, * for Karen's cousin Jenny, * and for those who are recovering from illness or injury; * or those who are facing other types of challenges in their lives. [Pause] Lord, you speak to us in so many ways. Grant that we can hear, respond, and live in love, just as you taught us to pray **LORD'S PRAYER**

Intro to and Bible Reading

Lay Reader: During the Last Supper, near the end of his life on earth, Jesus expresses the value he most hopes will be ingrained in his people. He first demonstrates it by taking on the role of a servant and washing the disciple's feet. Then later during the meal, Jesus tells them this:



“I will be with you only a short time more... I give you a new command: Love each other. You must love each other just as I loved you. All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other.”

John 13:33a,34-35 (ERV)

And while the disciples didn't know it at the time, Paul goes on to describe how Jesus went on to demonstrate that love for us more deeply – the next day he endured the curse of the cross -- so that if we believe in him, we will not perish, but have everlasting life. He writes:

... God has poured out his love to fill our hearts through the Holy Spirit he gave us. Christ died for us when we were unable to help ourselves. We were living against God, but at just the right time Christ died for us. Very few people will die to save the life of someone else, even if it is for a good person. Someone might be willing to die for an especially good person. But Christ died for us while we were still sinners, and by this God showed how much he loves us.

Romans 5:5b-8 (ERV)

Music Washing feet, dying on the cross, caring for neighbors – that is, for those who need care... and who doesn't need that from time to time? Let's stand if comfortable before the sermon and sing [Yay-zoo Yay-zoo]

Jesu, Jesu

Words: Tom Colvin, 1969 Music: Ghana Folk song;
arr. by Tom Colvin, 1969; harm. by Charles H. Webb, 1987
© 1969, 1989 Hope Publishing Co

Refrain

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.

1. Kneels at the feet of his friends, silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them.

(Refrain)

2. Neighbors are rich and poor, neighbors are black and white,
neighbors are near and far away.

(Refrain)

3. These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should love,
all these are neighbors to us and you.

(Refrain)

Sermon Aspiring to His Kind of Love

For generations, it had been a common rule. It first appeared in 1866. It was created as a ditty -- a sing song-y rhythm that helped us remember the rule. But the rule had exceptions to it. In 1888 the rule was expanded the rule to try and capture the exceptions. But there were too many exceptions, and it became complicated and confusing.

The Rule

Here is the rule is **"i" before "e" except after "c"**. The longer versions such as: "or when it sounds like a short 'a'." But even then, too many words escaped the even the longer versions that the farmer McDonald jumped in with [*say the "ei" with uncertain concentration, then the "oh" as a frustrated resignation*] "e - i e - i ohhh!" England made it a rule to abolish the rule because it was never really a rule in the first place. If you are a good speller without spell check, it is probably because, at least in this case, you ignored the rule and learned each word by practiced repetition.

Jesus also gave us a rule, a first rule. It wasn't meant to be complicated or have exceptions, but how and when it is lived out in what way is sometimes not obvious

to us. Paul gives us what is known as “the love chapter”, 1 Corinthians 13. It is a familiar passage, especially from its frequent reading at weddings. Unfortunately, that connection tends to relegate the passage to the marriage or “valentine” relationship and not how we are all supposed to treat each other, especially those within the church. In it, Paul elaborates on how important the rule is, what the rule looks like, and that we need to grow into this rule of love. He begins with the importance of it at the end of chapter 12...

Set your hearts then on the higher gifts. And now I will show you a way that is beyond comparison. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it benefits me nothing.

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:3 (MOUNCE)

I before E I before U <hr/> U with I

Paul spells out the priority of love. It is far more poetic and much less complicated than the chant of “**i before e except after c**”. It is central to our Christian faith that we love our neighbor as ourselves.

We value having compassion and empathy for others and serving them, but putting “i before u” is so deeply ingrained in the human fallen / sinful nature that even when we want to, even as we follow Jesus, most of us find that putting “u equally with i” doesn’t come naturally or easily.

Years ago, Nova TV advertised that it was going to air an intimate portrait of two groups whose members labor exclusively for the good of the community, where no individual put himself or herself first. Where were these remarkable groups marked by such selflessness? Some previously undiscovered community in the jungle or in the interior of the rain forest or on the ice in the far, frozen North? No. As it turns out it was in the common ant and cockroach. To find groups of people that are by nature selfless, Nova looked outside human existence to find other animals. It is a great challenge for us to live love consistently. Saying and knowing the rule and living it are two different things.

We’ve heard John and Paul write about the extremes of what Christ did to demonstrate God’s love, and that we are supposed to love as he loved, so after Paul tells us how critically important love is as the motivational force behind all we do, he now gives his “rules” for how to spell love -- not because he was looking for a subject for a poetic essay he could throw into his letter (and especially to be

uttered at weddings) Rather, he gives this description because the people at Corinth who had accepted Jesus and his love for them still needed help in spelling love in their actions and attitudes, in their relationships with each other and beyond the church. And so he tells them:

What love looks like

Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy. Love does not brag, it is not arrogant, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no account of wrongs, it takes no pleasure in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never comes to an end. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a (MOUNCE)

The perfect swish

Someone compared these verses to the perfect shot in basketball – the nothing but net, or swish! When said beforehand, it is a confident claim that there is no doubt that the shot will be made perfectly. When said after, it is a remark of admiration along the lines of applause given to a master violinist or the stare of wonderment of those admiring a great artist.

Being able to consistently repeat such quality time and again takes a skill developed by persistent training and practice. To love consistently day in and day out as Paul describes takes a lifetime of training and practice -- especially on those days when life's circumstances are coming at you like a "full court press" trying to "block your every move" and "bat the ball out of your hands".

The miss

Truth be told, there are days, sometimes even periods in our life, when even the best of us, having given our best shot, life painfully "clangs loudly off the rim" or we get the dreaded "air ball". We lose our patience against whatever or whoever tests us. Being kind (that is, being helpful, profitable, or beneficial) to some person or group may not enter our mind due to how we feel -- or it just doesn't dawn on us that they need that kind of loving touch. We may choose to become, or just drift, for whatever reason into jealousy, bitterness, and competitiveness instead of rejoicing with others' blessings and gifts and skills; and are unable to mourn with other's losses and hurts. When we become aware of these failures, our sins, it is easy to beat ourselves up, and to be beaten up by life.

And sometimes, some of us, in our challenges and/or failure, may feel too damaged or broken to play. Basketball has a rule for that too, you know. A fouled, injured player who cannot resume play, the coach can pick someone to go in and

The substitute

**with him,
we all
become better**

shoot his shots for him, and the coach will always pick someone who consistently always hits “nothing but net”.

We heard Paul tell us in the pre-sermon reading that while we were yet sinners and unable to help ourselves, we were wounded on the court and dragged off the court, the Father chose Jesus to step in as our substitute with his sinless, obedient life. And he is patient not wishing anyone to perish in judgment, but for all to be saved, Likewise, he perfectly fulfills what is kindness, a lack of competitive envy, he does it in humility and modesty, politely encouraging for the good of others... And with that perfect love, he takes our place. He takes our sin and failure on himself (through his sacrificial death on the cross),

and in so doing, because of his love -- he also places on us, and in us, his

The rebound

forgiveness, healing and righteousness which allows us to -- *rebound* -- in our life and begin to play again. There are special players on teams that can carry the team on their shoulders in hard times, but more importantly, because of their incredible talent, knowledge, and words, they inspire and increase the level of play of all the players around them. The team begins to work less like individual players competitively, selfishly lifting up their own skills (even on their own team). I’m not sure if that is still the term, but we used to call them hot dogs or show boats, right? And we’ve heard for a couple weeks now that this is what the Corinthians were doing to each other), but the dream is that they would begin using their varied talents and skills to coordinate and contribute more to the team to enhance the team’s effort. It is when we become the *team* that we finally began to succeed. Name any team in any sport and you’ll see the same thing. It is when they are family that they come together and they begin to win.

In the following verses, Paul has made it clear that we have not yet arrived at that level of maturity, we are still childish, but we need to put away childish things and keep moving forward toward maturity, and the more we do, the more clearly we will see and the more clearly we will understand and the more fully we will experience God and living in his love, and the more successfully we will love others as we should. Then Paul concludes the chapter by saying.

And now remain faith, hope, and love; these three. And the greatest of these is love. [and the first two words of the next chapter are] Pursue love,

1 Corinthians 13:13-14:1a (MOUNCE)

Are we still learning how to pursue the proper spelling of love? We need to keep striving to live love the best we can because Jesus taught that putting U with I is a significant part of what it means to be faithful to God. It is second only in importance to loving God himself. And he actually says that this command is like the first one – they go hand in hand, you can't separate them. Nothing distinguishes us as Christ-followers more clearly than a genuine commitment to love more radically, more earnestly, more deeply,

Communion Invitation and communion reminds us of God's love that we receive and that we share. Jesus established the Communion Supper as a perpetual reminder that we are God's children by the body and blood of Christ, and as his children we seek to become like him by opening our hearts and focusing our minds. All who seek to be loved and to love are welcome to participate.

Music Let us prepare our hearts for Communion by singing about the God's gift of love.....

The Gift of Love

Words: Hal Hopson, 1972 (1 Cor. 13:1-3)
 Music: Trad. English melody; adapt. by Hal Hopson, 1972
 © 1972 Hope Publishing Co

Though I may speak with bravest fire, and have the gift to all inspire,
 and have not love, my words are vain, as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess, and striving so my love profess,
 but not be given by love within, the profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control, our spirits long to be made whole.
 Let inward love guide every deed; by this we worship, and are freed.

Confession

Lord, the hymnwriter wrote that you freely give your gift of love to us. You give and give and give -- with eager hands. You spared nothing, you held nothing back, you poured out you love and risked everything. You completely expended yourself to show how complete is God's love for us. You make us spiritually rich, you set us free from, you give us power against sin's power. We can never know the depth of agony and expense, for Jesus became drained, and poor, and bound, and weak so that we could be strong, and free, and rich, and powerful. In your effort to show us God, you hung helpless on a tree with nails and thorns to tell what God's love must be. And on that cross we see no throned king in an easy state to reign – we see God whose arms of love are outstretched, aching, spent, in order to save and sustain his world.

Forgive us when in response, we fail to love you with our whole heart, fail to do your will, feel free to break your law and rebel against your love, by not loving our neighbors or hearing the cry of the needy. Forgive us and free us for joyful service through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Assurance

For we know that you are gracious and merciful, slow to anger and *abounding in love*, and in that love, you do not desire us to fall short of your love, but if we do sin, we do have Jesus Christ the Righteous One who will be our advocate as the sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world. Therefore we know that if we confess our sins, he will be faithful and just and forgive us our sins and purify us from all sin, that we may walk together in the light of his love, the light of his presence.

The Great Thanksgiving

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. You breathed life into us, and even when we turned away and our love failed, your love for us remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our God, and spoke to us through your prophets.

... And so, with all 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. Your Spirit anointed him to preach to the poor, proclaim release for those captive (to sin), giving sight and insight to those who couldn't see, to free the oppressed, and announce the time of your salvation. You healed the sick, fed the hungry, 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. You promised to



be with us forever in the power of your Word and the Spirit. And so, in remembrance of these 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 at home, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, redeemed by his blood. Make us one with Christ and with each other and in ministry to all the world until Christ comes and we feast at his heavenly banquet. We pray this 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.**

Receiving of Bread and Cup

On the night he gave himself up for us, he took the bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, "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, saying, "Drink from this all of you – this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. [Take and drink]

Prayer Almighty Father, you gift us with faith in your Son -- to trust you for forgiveness and for eternal life, a quality of life that begins even now. You gift us with a hope that we can better walk in this life of love each day by the power of the Holy Spirit that you have poured out in our hearts. Because we are loved by you in Jesus Christ, give us the confidence to love, and show us how to express that love, and point us to who needs to be served by our love -- in our words, with our resources, and in every action that we take. And we will give Jesus the glory for all the you do in and through us. Amen.

Music The love of God in Jesus shows us, our love for each other shows the world that we are Christians. Let's sing

They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love

Words: Peter Scholtes Music: Peter Scholtes

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We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
and we pray that our unity may one day be restored:

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love;
yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
and we'll guard human dignity and save human pride:

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

Blessing Now as we go, may we be strengthened, comforted, and inspired to live a life of love, bringing honor to God through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CCLI # 2561297