

# *Faith Presbyterian Church*

*Christians growing in Faith by caring, connecting &  
serving community*



*Honor your father  
and your mother, so  
that your days may  
be long ...*

Exodus 20:12, NRSV

## CELEBRATING GOD'S LOVE ON THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER,

May 10, 2020

### PRELUDE

### WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP

Welcome home.

God bids us to come

Find rest for our weariness,

Find peace deeper than our worry.

Welcome home,

All you lost, wandering or stuck in despair.

Welcome to God's arms, as wide as a father's care, as warm as a mother's love.

### OPENING PRAYER

God, the source of all healing, touch our lives with your Spirit. Give us, we pray, your peace and your forgiveness! Bring wholeness to our broken lives. Bring guidance to our troubled lives. Help us turn away from sin and selfishness and lead us in the ways of health, peace and love. Be with us now, here where we are, here in our worship; in the name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN # 111 "Good Christians All Rejoice and Sing"

CALL TO CONFESSION *Let us bring to God in prayer whatever weighs heavy on our minds and hearts today as we pray...*

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

### A TIME OF QUIET/PERSONAL CONFESSION

**Faithful God, you weave so many wonderful people into our lives: mothers and fathers, children and grandchildren, friends and neighbors. And so may we acknowledge them as blessings from you. May we say a word of thanks or whisper a prayer of gratitude. Faithful God, forgive us for taking anyone for granted. Give us eyes to see the miracles**

**around us. Give us hearts to care for each and every one. Give us voices to sing our thanks. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PARDON

RESPONSE ***"Halle, Halle, Hallelujah"***

*Now fold your hands in front of your heart and bow to your neighbors near and far, wishing them God's peace.*

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD (Acts 6:1-6, 7:55-60)

*6 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."*

*This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*

(time goes by, conflicts arise, disagreements over who Jesus is can't be resolved)

*But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

*At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.*

MEDITATION

In honor of Mother's Day today, our theme is how to play nice with other people. Did your mother teach you that? When I was growing up, there was always someone to play with in our neighborhood. One of my good friends lived right across the street, and another one right up the road. We got along well, as long as there were just the two of us. But when more of us kids got together for a game of kickball in the backyard, or hide and seek, inevitably somebody wouldn't get along with somebody else. We were smart though. We knew which mothers were strict and which were not, so often we would keep our disagreements to ourselves. We also knew how to work the system. We knew which mothers would drive us to the movies and pick us up again, and which were too busy to do that. There was one little girl whose mother was always willing to drive us places, except this same girl always seemed to be getting picked on. And my mother was on to us, because we would invite this girl to go with us to the movies only because we knew her mother would drive us there. I got in trouble for that once!

And in our story from Acts today, Steven gets in trouble because of what he believes about Jesus. This is in the very early days of the church when they were trying to get organized. But of course they had different opinions because they were from different places and backgrounds. One of the first challenges they were up against was how to take care of the most vulnerable people, like the widows. So what did they do? They created deacons! Let's give a shout out for the deacons, the hands-on workers of the church.

So this story about Steven starts off pretty well, but goes downhill from there. The church is growing and there aren't enough of them to get all the work done. As they put it, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables." I spent the summer of 1988 waiting on tables, and I can tell you that it's hard work. But waiting on tables back then was not quite the same thing. It doesn't mean that they were asking for help at the restaurant. Instead it meant caring

for people in need, including those widows. I don't think anyone's mother would have a problem with that. But back then several men (unfortunately no women are mentioned) stepped up to the plate to be prayed over with the laying on of hands. Stephen was one of those men and we hear that he did "great wonders and signs among the people." In fact his ministry was going so well that others began to see him and the early church movement as a threat to the status quo. And so they didn't play well together. That might have been OK if the disagreements were minor ones, like which color tablecloths to use, but that wasn't the case, and forgiveness was nowhere in the picture. And where was everybody's mother, reminding them to play well together? Sometimes playing together well has a lot to do with forgiveness.

One pastor found out more than he wanted to know about forgiveness when he asked his congregation, "How many of you have forgiven your enemies?" About 80 percent held up their hands. The minister then repeated his question a little more forcefully, as if to say, you all know what the right answer is here. So this time, everybody raised their hands, except one small elderly lady in the back row. The minister said, "Mrs. Jones? Aren't you willing to forgive your enemies?" "Well, I don't have any," she replied with a sweet smile on her face. "Mrs. Jones, that's very unusual. How old are you?" "Ninety-eight," she said. Thinking the congregation could learn something from this obviously saintly woman, the minister said, "Mrs. Jones, would you please come down front and tell us all how a person can live to be 98 years old and not have an enemy in the world?" Mrs. Jones came down the aisle and faced the congregation. The minister repeated the question, and said, "How did you do it?" She said, "Easy. I outlived every one of those darn people!"

Well, it's clear that Stephen has some enemies and he's not going to outlive them. But he doesn't back down. Instead he preaches one of the first sermons of the early church. You can read it in Acts 7. He basically

tells the history of God's people, beginning with Abraham, going on to Moses, and then Kings David and Solomon, before accusing the people of being stiff-necked and not following the lead of the Holy Spirit, and ultimately betraying Jesus himself. Stephen stood up for who Jesus was and he lost his life for his beliefs. It's rare, but not unknown, in our country today for people to lose their lives for what they believe: especially when we don't play well together.

Yet you can disagree with people without killing them, right? If your mother taught you well, you should be able to do that. We'll end with a few humorous takes on what our mothers taught us.

1. My mother taught me RELIGION. "You better pray that will come out of the carpet."
2. My mother taught me LOGIC. "Because I said so, that's why."
3. My mother taught me FORESIGHT. "Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."
4. My mother taught me STAMINA. "You'll sit there until all that spinach is gone."
5. My mother taught me the CIRCLE OF LIFE. "I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."
6. My mother taught me about ENVY. "There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do."
7. My mother taught me ANTICIPATION. "Just wait until your father gets home."
8. My mother taught me WISDOM. "When you get to be my age, you'll understand."
9. And last but not least, my mother taught me about JUSTICE. "One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!"

Did your mother teach you how to play well with others? If so, share what you learned with someone close to you today. I know we've all been learning lots of new things in the last 2 months. Hopefully we will take our wisdom with us as gradually things begin to reopen and Faith Church is back together again on May 31. Some of you may not feel quite ready

to come back though. So take your time, don't rush, and do what you feel comfortable doing, and we will stay in touch. Amen.

ANTHEM *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

Let us sing or say together...

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Christ, all people here below; Praise Holy Spirit evermore; Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.***

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

O Christ who reigns among us, make these gifts a part of your presence on earth. Bless them and send them through us, that we might be your channels of peace and care, to those near and far who need them the most. Keep us in covenant with you always, and especially in our giving, we pray. Amen.

HYMN #118 "The Day of Resurrection!"

BENEDICTION

Response "Glory to God" (Words by John Derrickson)

***As we go forth, we'll live each day for him, Almighty Lord, who washed away all sin, All glory and honor, be unto his name. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.***

POSTLUDE