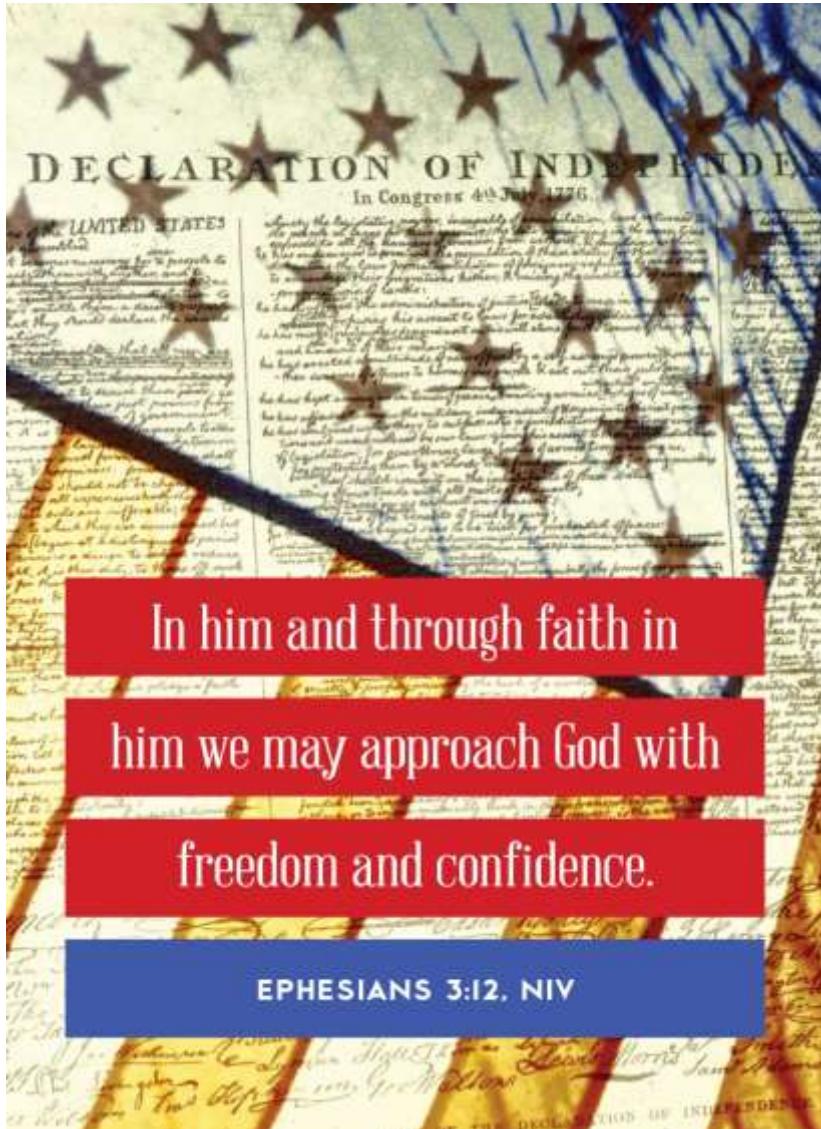


Faith Presbyterian Church

Christians growing in faith by caring,
connecting & serving community



CELEBRATING GOD'S LOVE ON COMMUNION SUNDAY

July 5, 2020

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

From shore to shore -

Let God's praise be sung.

From mountains high to valleys low --

Let the echo of praise resound.

From the mouths of children and the prayers of the saints --

Let thanksgiving abound.

For great is our God

And greatly to be praised.

OPENING PRAYER

We praise you, extraordinary God, for the holiness of ordinary things — a gathering of fellow pilgrims, a song of praise, a prayer of thanksgiving, a word, a loaf of bread, and a cup. On this Independence Day weekend, we are grateful for the freedom to worship and respond to your call on our lives. Send your Holy Spirit to move through us now; seep into the cracks and crevices of our hearts, that we might know you more fully and worship you more deeply. Amen.

*HYMN #561

“My Country, ‘Tis of Thee”

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAAYER OF CONFESSION

Most merciful God, we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and follow in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

A TIME OF QUIET/PERSONAL CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PARDON

*RESPONSE “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying”
(Sing the Faith #2193)

*Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love us, send us power, send us grace.*

PASSING THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you!

And also with you.

Please greet one another with a sign of God's peace.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

SPECIAL MUSIC

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30(p.717)

On this Fourth of July weekend, and in honor of our country's national bird, here's a story about an eagle who was caught by a farmer when it was young and put in a pen with the chickens and ducks on the farm and given chicken food to eat, even though, as an eagle, it was quite capable of catching its own dinner. But the eagle grew up depending on the farmer and lived

on the farm for 5 years. Then one day a bird expert was passing through the area when he wandered onto the farm and happened to look into the chicken coop. He said, "my gosh, you have an eagle in there." And the farmer said, "yes, but I have trained it to be a chicken. It isn't an eagle anymore."

'No,' said the bird expert, 'it's still an eagle; it has the heart of an eagle and the wingspan of an eagle, and I will help it soar high up in to the heavens.' 'No,' said the farmer, 'I doubt that. It is a chicken and will never fly.' So, they agreed to a test. The bird expert picked up the eagle, held it up and said with great confidence 'Eagle, you belong to the sky and not to this earth; stretch forth your wings and fly.' The eagle turned this way and that, and then looking down, saw the chickens eating their food, and down he jumped. This prompted the farmer to say; 'I told you it was a chicken.'

'No,' said the bird expert, 'it is an eagle. Give it another chance tomorrow. So, the next day he took it all the way up to the rooftop and said: 'Eagle, you belong to the sky, and not to this earth; stretch forth your wings and fly.' But again, the eagle, saw the chickens eating their feed down below and he jumped down and joined them. Once more the farmer said: 'I told you it was a chicken.'

Let's give it one more chance, said the bird expert. So, the next morning he rose early and took the eagle to the foot of a high mountain when the sun was just rising. He picked him up and said: 'Eagle, you belong to the sky and not to the earth; stretch forth your wings and fly.' The eagle looked around. He knew something was up. But still he didn't fly. And then the birdman took the eagle's head and made him look straight at the sun. With that the eagle suddenly stretched out his wings and, with a very loud eagle-sounding screech, he flew out of the man's hands and up higher and higher and never returned.

I don't have anything against chickens, but there's no verse in the Bible about chickens that's quite like this one about eagles. *Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint*" (Isaiah 40:31.) Put our hope in God, gain some strength and energy, and then away we go. That's all good. But in order to fly like an eagle, we need some rest and renewal. So take a deep breath. Let's unpack what Jesus is getting at in these verses from Matthew 11.

Just like he does so often and so well, Jesus challenges the way things were in his day. He's trying to get the people to think closely about how they practice their faith. And he doesn't mince his words. So first he compares his generation to a group of children playing games, doing what kids do. A pipe, similar to a flute or a recorder, would have been played at a wedding, and a dirge would have been sung at a funeral. The children, like they do today, were playing by imitating the adults. But these children are also mocking each other and being really petty. Also, the people's comments about John the Baptist and Jesus are nit-picky and petty. You didn't do what we said! You didn't play our game! That's the kind of tone children use. Jesus is accusing his generation of finding fault for no reason and being childish. So then he says "wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." In other words, if you're on the right track with the way you live and practice your faith, you'll know by the way things turn out.

Do you ever feel that tension between doing things the way they've always been done versus trusting that a new way of doing things will work out? It's hard. And yet Jesus is saying, go for it! And don't be petty and don't find fault too easily. Jesus is saying, my way is so simple that little children (younger than the ones who were playing games), but really small children who haven't been jaded by the world yet, understand better than we adults do. Have you ever seen a little child fall asleep? That's trust, or exhaustion. Like when their mom or dad is holding them and suddenly their head droops and they're gone, fast asleep: total trust that they are safe and well taken care of. That's what Jesus is asking for.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Here's our rest today: a free gift of grace from God in the form of this bread and this cup. It has been 4 months since we celebrated communion, but it seems longer than that. It may be wrapped in plastic, and it may look a little funny, but it's still a sacrament, an outward and visible sign of the invisible, but heartfelt grace God has given us. We can see this love, and we can taste it. Praise God for that blessing!

Verse 29: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* So, we're not talking about egg yolks here, just in case you were thinking about breakfast. We're talking about the kind of yoke that binds together two working animals, like oxen. One might be

stronger than the other. One might be just learning how to pull a load. And so you bind them together and they are much stronger. When we yoke ourselves with Jesus, we get stronger without having to do any extra weightlifting at all! We can't go wrong. And we can rest anytime we need to because Jesus is there to take up the slack. I know what you're thinking. Well, that's very nice and all, but if I didn't do xyz job here at Faith Church, it wouldn't get done. And to that I would say, if nobody else is willing to do it, maybe it doesn't need to get done, or maybe it could be tweaked a little bit. In other words, let's take Jesus up on his offer of rest, so that we can put our energy and focus on what's really needed.

Verse 30: *For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*"

There once was a little boy who was helping his dad with the yard work. Dad asked him to pick up the rocks in a certain area of the yard so they could make a garden. A few minutes went by and then Dad looked over and saw his son struggling to pull up a huge rock buried in the dirt. The little boy struggled and struggled while Dad watched. Finally, the boy gave up and said, "I can't do it." Dad asked, "Did you use all of your strength?" The little boy looked hurt and said, "Yes, daddy. I'm just not strong enough." The father smiled and said, "But you didn't use all of your strength, because you didn't ask me to help." He then walked over to his son, and then the two of them together pulled that big rock out of the dirt.

What do we need help with today? Maybe we need help just to take a break and rest from all that's going on in the world. Let's take another deep breath. I'm very touched and I feel blessed to be called as your regular pastor. Thank you. Good things are happening at Faith Church. What do you think God has in store for the future? Let's take that thought with us today as we rest. We're sharing the load with Jesus so we can give it all over to him and let him do some heavy lifting on this Independence Day weekend. Our only job today is to accept these loving gifts from God—this bread and this cup. As we eat and drink, let's give thanks for so many good gifts. In spite of all the heartache and sickness and anxiety and unrest in our world, we are still here together, and God is with us. Let's let that be enough for today. Amen.

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

*HYMN #513

“Let us Break Bread Together”

As we sing, please come forward, if you are able, and take the bread and the cup back to your seat.

Let us break bread...

Let us drink wine...

Let us praise God...

SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

May God 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.

Let us pray...

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Gracious God, we thank you for this holy meal. May we who share Christ’s body, live his risen life; may we who drink his cup, bring life to others; may we whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so that we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD’S PRAYER

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

Call to the Offering

*Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ, all people here below;

Praise Holy Spirit evermore;

Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen

PRAAYER OF DEDICATION

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts; our time, our talents and our treasures. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love; through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

*HYMN #564

“O Beautiful for Spacious Skies”

*BENEDICTION

* RESPONSE “The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve”

(Sing the Faith #2241)

*We go to be the hands of Christ, to scatter joy like seed
And, all our days, to cherish life, to do the loving deed.*

POSTLUDE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you for following the guidelines set by session for worship and any other time you are in the church building. Please wear a mask, observe social distancing, and make ample use of the hand sanitizers throughout the building. And together we will love our neighbors as ourselves.

Pastor Julia will be in the office this week Tues, Weds and Thursday, 10-2, and other hours by appointment.

Popcorn with the Pastor continues on Tuesdays at 6:30 PM. Join in for a time of informal conversation over Zoom. If you would like to learn how to use Zoom and/or receive the link to join the call, please contact Pastor Julia or Don Niece.

Next Sunday there will be a congregational meeting for the purpose of changing the by-laws to bring session down from

nine to six elders and to elect two new elders to session, and dissolve the PNC.

Blankets by Faith is now meeting Wednesdays at 10:30. All are welcome to come and participate in this wonderful ministry.

<u>This Sunday's Leadership</u>	<u>Next Sunday's Leadership</u>
Worship Leader- Jan Gifford	Worship Leader- Jo Hall
Usher – Diane Grycz	Usher – Bev Brown
Greeter– Mary Skare	Greeter– Diane Grycz

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY

Maria Beimly

Rick Latimer

Pat Peck

Bob & Emily

Norma Lresher

Jan Schroeder

Christian

Betsy Morris

Mary Swartzel

Beth Griffin

Sets Nagaoka

David Henry

*To remind us of our connection with the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, please pray for **Southminster Presbyterian Church**, located at 7001 Far Hills Avenue, Dayton and their pastor Rev. Nancy Birdsong.*

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