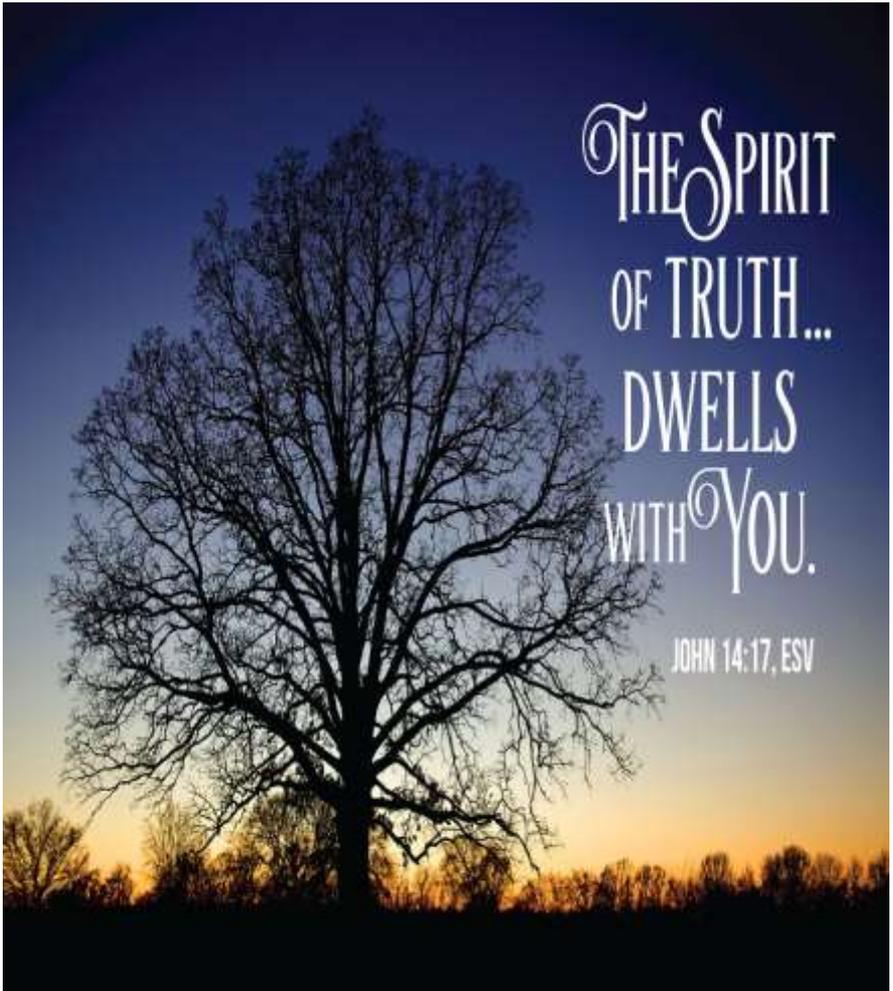


Faith Presbyterian Church

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



**CELEBRATING GOD'S LOVE ON THE SIXTH
SUNDAY OF EASTER, May 17, 2020**

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 105)

O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name!

Make known his deeds among the people.

Sing to him and tell of all his wonderful works.

Glory in his holy name.

Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Remember the wonderful works he has done,

All you offspring of Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and Compassionate God, we welcome your presence here among us in our separate places. As we join in this virtual worship, help us to find peace by resting in your love. Then help us to be patient with all that is unresolved within us. May we embrace your compassion that was taught to us by Jesus. It is with that kind of compassion and strength that we may bring light and hope to others in these difficult times. Connected by the love we hold in our hearts for one another, we are together no matter how far apart we are. Amen.

HYMN #338

“Kum ba Yah”

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

Gentle God, the signs of your presence are everywhere as spring makes itself known more and more each day. Yet often our eyes are blind to your wonder and our ears plugged to your words. We distrust the dreams that come in the early dawn. Often it feels like it would take an

earthquake to lift our hearts to you. We carry long-time grudges and deep-seated resentments that block the flow of your grace. Hollow out a space in us, O God, so that we may notice your beauty, hear your whispers and follow your bidding. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A TIME OF QUIET/PERSONAL CONFESSION

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

(John 14:15-21)

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

MEDITATION

One of the conversation topics during Popcorn with the Pastor a few days ago was bird sightings and all the funny things birds do. One of my most memorable bird stories, although it's a little sad, happened a few years ago. This was when we lived in PA and our back yard was a baseball field that belonged to the church. The parsonage where we lived was in the outfield behind second base. When we first moved there, I wondered why there were metal awnings on the back

windows. Then at the first town softball league practice in the spring, I found out why. You certainly wouldn't want one of those softballs coming through your window! The other thing in the outfield, besides our house, was a really huge tree, perfect for the robins to build a nest, nice and high up. Except for one danger-- the crows.

One spring morning I was looking out the kitchen window when I heard lots of angry chirping and saw a commotion in the outfield, right by that big tree. Several robins were flying angrily around two crows, one of whom had something in its mouth. I looked closer as I saw the crow drop a baby bird onto the grass. The baby opened its beak and started squawking right along with its parents. The crow swooped down and grabbed the baby again. So I banged on the window and started yelling "go away!" But the crows didn't listen. So I opened the back door and went outside with our dog and yelled some more. The crow dropped the baby robin back on the grass. But at that point I realized there was nothing I could do. The nest was too high up. I could try to rescue the baby and dig up some worms myself. But I knew the likelihood that the baby would survive was not good. So I went back inside. A few minutes later I saw something out of the corner of my eye. There, perched just outside the window, was one of the robins peering in at me, as if to say "at least you showed up."

At least you ran out the back door with your dog and tried to chase those crows away. It was like the robin was saying to me, "I know there was nothing you could have done, because sometimes bad stuff just happens, but at least you showed up." Often "showing up" is all we can do. We can't cure all diseases. We can't fix all the problems. We can't stop bigger birds from bullying smaller birds. But there is something we can do. We can show up. We can show up for people we love and even for people we don't know and aren't sure if we love. We can show up because we care.

And I think that's one of the biggest reasons why the past 2 months have been so difficult. It's because we care and

we can't show up in the ways that we're used to. I've heard you all say recently how much you miss going out to lunch, how much you miss worship and coffee and goodies afterwards. You miss quilting together and the small groups like PW, the book group and the Lenten Study we never got to finish. We care for one another by showing up, but how do you show up in the midst of a pandemic? Well, there's always the telephone, and email and texting and Facebook and You Tube. And if you're under 30, you know a lot more than I do about the latest new social media apps like TikTok or WhatsApp.

But Jesus didn't need any of these things to show up for his disciples. Here they are together one last time after supper. Jesus says to them, "*if you love me, keep my commands.*" In other words, love God and love your neighbor. Pretty simple, at least at first glance. But then there's always the danger of getting caught up in the details, maybe second-guessing ourselves, or wondering if we're doing enough. So we keep listening. And Jesus begins talking about the Holy Spirit. And that's good because we're getting close to Pentecost. He says that God will send us an advocate to help us; someone who's on our side, a supporter, maybe even a cheerleader. I was never a cheerleader in high school. The best cheerleaders I have had in my life have been people who have listened deeply to me and really understood where I was coming from, and helped me to move forward in some way through understanding myself better. I hope you have someone in your life who listens and really understands. Recently I was reminded that if we want to help someone else, 70% of that person's overall experience of feeling better, comes from simply being present with them and listening well. That's pretty amazing.

When I was in the hospital just before our son was born, 26 years ago, the conference minister (the equivalent of the Presbytery's EP) showed up at the hospital to see me. She lived about an hour away, so I knew she had taken a good chunk of time out of her day to come down to Binghamton. I don't

remember a word she said, and it was a short visit, but I haven't forgotten that she showed up. That's what mattered the most.

Next Jesus says he will not leave us as orphans. Many of us, but not all of us, are orphans in the sense that our parents have died; and so the world can seem a little lonely. But here Jesus gives us that promise that he is with us, in a mysterious way that we can't define or really grasp. Yet there he is and because he lives, we also will live. And by that I have a feeling he means something bigger than this life as we know it. We tend to define life as the time between birth and death. Our lives go forward into the future one day at a time. And while we like to talk about tomorrow, we know tomorrow will never get here. It just turns into today.

But I like to imagine that God's point of view is wider than that. I like to imagine that God is outside of time. God sees all time at once. Now if that's not a mystery, I don't know what is. I only know that it makes some sense to me to talk about God being outside of time. So we're down here living day to day, and God is up there seeing all of time at once; yesterday, today and tomorrow.

So when we show up for each other on May 31, there will be some guidelines in place to keep everybody safe. But even then, some people may not feel ready to come back to church yet. And so we are planning to continue recording the worship service and posting it on YouTube. We'll be asking everyone to wear masks and to practice social distancing. The offering plates will be on the table for you to put your offering in, and I will repeat the joys and concerns instead of passing the microphones from person to person. And we'll keep the doors open and keep the air flowing. Next week you'll get a letter from session with all those details you need to know.

Jesus' words to his disciples and to us today end with, *"Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me."* In other words, love is an action verb. Love God. Love your neighbor. Love yourself. Yet sometimes that love means staying home and not showing up. Either way, as

that children's song says, "I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together." Let's keep on being the church as best we can, and we'll close with this prayer from John Henry Newman.

Support us, O Lord, all the long day of this troubled life until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, when the busy fever of life is hushed, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy grant us a safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ANTHEM

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Kum ba yah my Lord, Come by here, and be with us in this time of prayer. May we feel your presence close by as we lift our joys and concerns to you. We give thanks for graduations this month, especially Faith Preschool. Even though the usual ceremonies won't take place, still there is a sense of joy and accomplishment as students of all ages finish one part of their lives and move on to the next. May they do so with your blessing and your hand on their lives. May they do so with joy, even as also mourning the loss of these last days of being together with friends and teachers.

We have joys for birthdays this week—for Norma and for Brian, we give you thanks for them and wish them well.

As we sing those words "come by here" we also sing "someone's crying, someone's praying and someone is singing." Your world and your people O God are vast in their diversity, and in their experience during this challenging time. And so we lift to you those most in need of your comfort and guidance: our frontline workers, nurses, doctors, first responders. All those who are ill, or feeling down, or lonely or abandoned, we lift in prayer today.

Guide our feet, dear God and hold our hand. Stand by us, while we run this race we call life, today and into all of our

tomorrows. Hear our voices as we lift them to pray the words Jesus taught his disciples...

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

Eternal God, we gladly accept your call to discipleship and along with that call, the cost of discipleship. We know that nothing less than our whole life is required of us. And so we dedicate the gifts we give in response to Christ's call, and offer ourselves in full commitment. Please mold us according to your will through Christ and send these gifts out to do your work in the world. Guide our feet as we go. Amen.

HYMN #354

“Guide My Feet”

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS Pastor Julia will be on vacation this week (May 17-24.) Rev. Linda will be on call, and also hosting Popcorn with the Pastor Tuesday night.