

July 18, 2021  
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pastor Lynn will be away on vacation for two weeks beginning on Wednesday. During the first week (July 21-27), you can contact Rev. Lauren Allen (pastor at First UCC in Troy) for pastoral emergencies; and during the second week (July 28-August 3), you can contact Pastor Alecia. Both of those phone numbers will be available by calling the office. Pastor Lynn will be available again on Wednesday, August 4.

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, celebrate God's creative power that we see in the world around us!  
Come, celebrate God's comforting power that we see in the embrace of a friend!  
Come, celebrate God's loving power that we see in the grace of Jesus Christ!  
Come, celebrate God's power that sustains us in so many ways!

### OPENING PRAYER

We stand in awe of your mighty power, O God, the power that created us, sustains us, and promises us a future more fulfilling than anything we can imagine! Use your power to make us better human beings, more ready to follow Jesus Christ and to serve others through his Spirit. During this time of worship, use your power to lift us into your presence! We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

### TIME FOR REMEMBERING

Martha McCowan

Today's memories are as much about all of you as they are about Martha. Martha McCowan had been a member of our church for only a relatively short time when she passed away in November 2020 at 103 years old. During that time, though, she was embraced by our congregation as though she had been a member all her life. Martha was married to the late Thurman McCowan for nearly 60 years, and they had been members of the Merlin Heights UCC. She joined Nashville after that church closed its doors. She knew from the moment she set foot in our sanctuary that this was the church for her. She was delighted when we voted her into membership in the congregation! You welcomed Martha with open arms, showing her the kind of hospitality that Christian congregations are called to practice. When Martha joined our church, she no longer drove; so members of our congregation brought her to church on Sunday mornings. During those drives, she would regale her chauffeur of the day with stories of her life – and there were a lot of those! Anyone who talked with Martha soon discovered that she had three great loves in her life: her late husband Thurman, to whom she had been married for 60 years; her family; and her God. Martha had held a number of different jobs during her life, and met a variety of interesting people. And of course, she shared her memories of Thurman, and bragged about her four generations of grandchildren. She was so proud of all of them! She looked forward to visits with Pastor Janice and the conversations that they would share. At Christmas time, our Key of C Carolers group would visit her, and we were always warmly welcomed. The year that she celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, we presented her with a birthday cake after Sunday worship, and I remember her delight. Martha was always humble, gracious, and appreciative. Martha may not have been as involved in our church life as folks like Mabel Cain, Lois Scheaffer, or Nancy Boak were; but Martha gave us the opportunity to give generously to someone who could not give to us. Well done, thou good and faithful servants. Well done!

### SCRIPTURE READING Mark 5:21-24, 35-42

*When Jesus had crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him... [This story is interrupted by the story of the woman with the flow of blood who was healed when she touched the hem of Jesus' garment.] While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus,*

*the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" Ignoring what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe." He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.*

## MEDITATION

### "It's Too Late"

Any of you who are fans of Western movies will know exactly what I mean when I say that the cavalry is on the way! The arrival of the cavalry means that help is coming! You all know the scene. The camera focuses on a fort that is under attack; and the settlers in the fort are greatly outnumbered. A huge group of Indian warriors are riding around the fort shouting war cries and shooting arrows with deadly accuracy at the men who are atop the walls of the fort. Although the people in the fort fight bravely, they know that it's only a matter of time until the Indians overpower them. Those Indians will eventually breach the walls of the fort, force open the gates, and massacre all of the inhabitants. But the settlers in the fort have managed to get a message to the local cavalry detachment asking for their help; and they hope against hope that the cavalry arrives in time. The movie camera cuts away to the headquarters of the cavalry, where the cavalry commander opens the message from the fort and immediately calls for his men to saddle up! Flags flying and bugles blaring, the cavalry gallops to the fort's defense. When they arrive at the hill that overlooks the fort – there is always a hill in the distance, isn't there? – they stop to assess the situation. How will this scene end? We assume that the Indians will flee in the face of the advancing cavalry. If that is the way the script is written, the people in the fort will celebrate joyfully as the Indians retreat and the cavalry triumphantly rides up to the gates. But there is another possible ending that we don't like nearly as well. If someone like Quentin Tarentino directed the movie, the cavalry would arrive on the hilltop and see no Indians at all. The walls of the fort would be ablaze, its gates hanging open limply. There would be no sign of life. The commander would turn to the trooper beside him and say grimly, "We're too late."

Those might be the three most distressing words in the English language. "We're too late." There is nothing more that anyone can do. The end has come. We are stunned by the finality of those words. A cold lump settles in the pit of our stomach; and for a long moment, our brain stops working. All we can do is focus on the fact that we can't do anything more. That must have been how Jairus felt when people met him with the terrible news that his daughter had died. His little girl, the one on whom he doted, the one he had carried on his shoulders, the one who had given him big hugs and loving kisses – that beautiful little girl was gone. He had been so sure that Jesus could heal her; but now, there was nothing that anyone could do. "Don't bother the teacher anymore," his friends said. "It's too late."

But Jesus didn't seem to be troubled at all. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Just believe." Believe? Believe in the midst of mind-numbing grief? Believe what? Believe that what just happened didn't really happen at all? Believe that his friends were mistaken and that he would find his daughter alive and well when he reached his home? Believe that the hands of time could be turned back? Believe that death wasn't real? We can't believe any of those things, and I'm pretty sure that Jairus didn't believe them, either. When we hear the words, "It's too late," and Jesus responds, "Don't be afraid; just believe," we are confused and wonder what he means. That confusion disappears, though, when we find that the Greek word that is usually translated "believe" can also be translated as "trust." "Don't be afraid," said Jesus. "Just trust." Trust? Why, we do that all the time! We trust that the sun will rise tomorrow. We trust that our friends won't betray us behind our backs. We trust that God loves us. Although we may not know the future, we know that some things are reliable; and those are the things that we trust. That's what Jesus was asking Jairus to do: to trust him, even though all of Jairus' friends said, "It's too late." Jairus had no idea about the extent of Jesus' compassion and power; but he trusted. He went with Jesus,

even though his friends were mourning and wailing; even though they laughed at Jesus; even though... well, even though it was too late.

And we know – as Paul Harvey would have said – the rest of the story. When they reached Jairus' home, Jesus shooed everyone out except Jairus, his wife, and Jesus' most trusted disciples. Jairus and his wife were weeping, and the disciples stood uncertainly in a corner, not even sure why they were there. Jesus knelt over the bed where the dead child was laid. He touched her hair... he touched her hand... and then he said, with love and power, "Little girl, I tell you: get up." The child's eyelids fluttered, then opened. Her parents gasped, and the mouths of the disciples fell open. With Jesus holding tightly to her hand, the child sat up in bed, then stood up and walked to her parents, who enfolded her in a joyous embrace. It was too late... but Jesus was there; and Jairus trusted him.

Jesus asks the same thing of us. When it's too late, he tells us, "Don't be afraid. Just trust me." The question isn't whether Jesus can do anything about the situation. We know that he can. We *believe* that he can! The question is whether or not we trust him to do anything. Most of the time, we don't; and the reason is that Jesus frequently doesn't do what we hope he will do. When it's too late, we want Jesus to use his power to perform a miracle: cure our cancer, help us win the lottery, even raise the dead. Sometimes he does. More often, though, he uses his loving power to do something else, something that we never even imagined! And so, he asks us to trust him; and he asks us to trust him especially at those times when we say, "It's too late." Because the reality is that although it may be too late for *us*, it is never too late for Jesus.

I leave you with this thought. When you are tempted to shake your head in despair, weep, and say those three words, "It's too late," remember that there are three other words that are even more powerful: "Jesus is here." Just trust him.

## PRAYER

Almighty God, we are so slow to trust your love and power. Although Jesus showed us again and again that he is able to redeem even situations that are hopeless for us, we don't really believe that he can do anything. Help us to trust him. When it is too late for us to take any action and we are powerless, help us to find the faith to say, "Although I don't know what you intend to do, Jesus, I trust you. Bring life out of death one more time." Amen.

## JOYS AND CONCERNS

Concerns:

- Kim Hannahan's sister-in-law Ann passed into glory on Thursday. Ann has suffered from Alzheimer's, and had been declining for quite some time. Please keep Kim and her family in your prayers.
- My friend Teri Delk who has been diagnosed with breast cancer.
- The father of our son-in-law Mike passed into glory early Monday morning. He had been moved to Hospice care the day before. His name was William McManus. Please keep that family in your prayers.
- Judy Butts has her 5<sup>th</sup> of 6 chemotherapy treatments on Tuesday for ovarian cancer.
- Lorraine Craig has family living close to the fires in the Pacific Northwest. Please pray for their safety, and for the safety of everyone living there.
- Please pray that God's will be done for the Nashville UCC church.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE and THE LORD'S PRAYER

Creative, powerful God, you carved the universe out of chaos simply by speaking the words, "Let there be..." With just a breath, you gave life to a lump of clay, and that molded piece of earth became a living being, made in your image.

In Christ, that word became flesh: a living word, a touching word, an enlightening word, an empowering word, a healing word – a word that expresses your love for all things.

Through the Spirit, your word fills us with the power to spread your healing love to everyone around us. Your word of power is a word of love! Yet, when we think of your power, we so often think of earthquakes and floods, of lightning and violent winds, of thunder and of judgement. We don't think of words spoken with compassion. We don't think of tender touches, gentle whispers, or eyes that speak a thousand loving words without any sound at all.

But we should; for you are the One whose power shakes the world through the beat of the human heart.

You are the One whose power is shown through humility.

You are the One whose essence is love.

Open our eyes this day to the many ways that your creative, healing power is among us and within us. Open our eyes to opportunities to reflect your word of love through the words that we ourselves speak to others.

Help us to speak words of life to those who live in the shadow of death;

words of love to those who are lonely;

words of enlightenment to those who are confused;

words of comfort to those who are frightened;

words of encouragement to those who are frustrated;

words of empowerment to those who are oppressed;

words of guidance to those who are lost;

words of healing to those who are suffering.

And as we speak, may our words always reflect your Word;

the Word who came to us to be among us;

the Word who brought us faith, hope, and love.

We ask all these things in the name of the One who is your Word made flesh; the One who lived for us and died for us; and now we join in the prayer that he taught his followers to pray, saying, *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.*

#### PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

The Camp Challenge has raised over \$600 from congregational donations. Remember that these donations will go to Templed Hills, our UCC summer camp, to help with much-needed renovations. If you are interested in donating, write a check to "Nashville UCC" and put "Camp Challenge" on the memo line. Esther will be collecting donations through the end of July.

#### PRAYER OF DEDICATION

We bring our offerings to you again, O God. Sometimes we bring offerings of money, but sometimes we bring offerings of time spent helping others, prayers for those who are in pain, or ears for those who need someone to listen. Bless all our offerings, generous God, and use them for the work of your kingdom. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### BENEDICTION

Go now to love and serve the Lord.

And as you go, remember that Jesus has all power in heaven and earth – the power to heal us;

the power to make us whole once again;

even the power to raise us from the dead;

the power that will be with us always, today and forever.

And when you are tempted to say, "It's too late," remember:

Jesus is here! Amen.

## Daily thoughts June 12-16

### Monday, July 12

It's Monday again; and don't we just love Mondays? That was a sarcastic comment, in case you didn't catch it. Mondays are most people's least favorite day of the week. On Mondays, we resume our regular schedule of work and errands. The weekends are much more fun, aren't they? So Mondays are a good day for an attitude check! How are you feeling today: optimistic and upbeat, or pessimistic and anxious? No matter what kind of troubles you may be experiencing right now, we Christians always have a reason to be optimistic. We know that the presence of God goes with us through good times and bad; we have a home with God in this world and the next; and we can be certain that God will bring good out of even the most difficult situations. I was reminded this morning that optimists tend to recover from illness more quickly, be healthier, and have a better quality of life than pessimists who continually expect the worst. If you are the kind of person who focuses on difficulties even in good times, try this exercise. Every evening, make a list of five things that went *right* that day. Can't think of anything? You might start with the fact that the sun rose, and you are still alive. That's two things already! If you do this on a regular basis, you might find your attitude changing – even on Mondays! Remember, whether you are an optimist or a pessimist, God loves you – and so do I. Blessings on all of you!

### Wednesday, July 14

Last Sunday, our family celebrated my grandson Michael's third birthday! He has grown into a happy young boy who loves Spiderman and is always ready to have some fun. He loves playing T-ball, learning the alphabet, and playing with Play-Doh. He brings all of us a great deal of joy! It's obvious why we celebrate children's birthdays: we want to show them how happy we are that they were born. When we get older, though, birthdays don't mean quite so much. Eating cake and ice cream just packs on the pounds; and blowing out all those candles is too much of a chore for those of us who are... well, let's just say well into maturity! So we overlook our birthdays, saying things like, "Oh, it's just another day." The fact is, though, that it isn't! We are all gifts of God, every one of us! Someone is very happy that you were born! In fact, to someone, you may be the whole world. So celebrate your birthday when it rolls around, no matter whether you are young, not so young, or older than dirt (the category in which I now find myself). You are a gift of God, and we are happy that you were born! And go ahead and eat that birthday cake. Your birthday only happens once a year, but I hope that you celebrate every single day. Blessings on all of you!

### Friday, July 16

As I was scrolling through Facebook yesterday, this post caught my eye. I don't know who wrote it, so I can't give credit for it. Whoever wrote it, though, was wise. I share it with you now. "You are holding a cup of coffee when someone comes along and bumps into you, making you spill coffee everywhere. Why did you spill the coffee? 'Because someone bumped into me!' you reply. But that's the wrong answer. You spilled the coffee because there was coffee in your cup. Had there been tea in the cup, you would have spilled tea. Whatever is inside the cup is what will spill out. Therefore, when life comes along and shakes you, whatever is inside you will spill out. So... ask yourself: 'what's in my cup?' When life gets tough, what spills out? Is it joy, gratefulness, peace, and humility; or is it anger, bitterness, and harsh words? Life provides the cup, but YOU choose how to fill it." In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, tolerance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Let's work towards filling our lives with those things! Wouldn't it be wonderful if those are the things that spill out when we are shaken!?

Blessings on all of you!