

3 Lent – March 7, 2021

To Our Zion Family,

Although sometimes I complain that our society has become too reliant on technology for our communication at the expense of face-to-face interaction, this past Sunday Nancy and I were thankful for what technology can provide, at least at times. We “attended” last Sunday morning’s service by dialing in on our smart phone while driving south on the New Jersey Turnpike. Although it didn’t replace being able to see the faces of all who were on the “Brady Bunch” screen, which doesn’t replace our being together in the sanctuary face-to-face, we nonetheless felt connected to you all as we listened to Rev. Jen’s “Story Corp” sermon, Wendy offering the Prayers of Intercession, and Kelli playing *Lift High the Cross*. I enjoyed Diana and Gail’s shared memory during the “joyful chaos” of taking the Youth Group to a conference many years back and having all those youth in attendance forming a huge cross on the football field. We were glad to be with you, if only by phone, and look forward to seeing all those able to attend on Zoom this coming Sunday.

**-This Sunday we continue with our remote worship practice**, offering the service **via Zoom, livestreamed on Facebook**, or by using the **printed Service of the Word**, which you will find later in this mailing. **To join this Sunday’s service via Zoom**, same log-in info as last week:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNblolQzd6WGxDdz09> Meeting ID: 843-5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, +16465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654# US (New York). If you would prefer **to view the service via livestream** on our YouTube channel, you can do so by visiting our page at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzOtbfCe2z7-bIPvxp621A>.

**-Call Committee update:** As you know, Zion is in the midst of a call process to find our next pastor. The call committee recently completed the process of vetting the first candidate brought forward by the Synod. The committee reviewed written materials submitted by the candidate, watched taped sermons and services, and interviewed the candidate via Zoom on two occasions. **After careful consideration and deliberation, the committee did not find this candidate to be the right fit for Zion.** While securing a pastor is certainly the goal, selecting a candidate well-suited to help Zion live out our mission is worth the wait. We appreciate the seriousness with which the call committee has undertaken their responsibilities and thank them for their ongoing work. We now continue forward and will find the right person to lead our congregation.

-The Church Council meets next on March 8<sup>th</sup>. Please contact a council member if you have any issues or concerns you’d like our council to be addressing.

-The Task Force on Returning to In-Person Worship and our Technology team met on March 2<sup>nd</sup> to **prepare for the upcoming in-person services for Holy Week, scheduled for Palm Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, and Easter Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>.** A “dress rehearsal” will be conducted on March 20<sup>th</sup> to insure that Zooming the in-person service for those unable to attend will go smoothly.

-Rev. Jen concluded this past Sunday’s service with these words in the closing blessing: “You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you that you may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.” One of my favorite quotes, often attributed to St. Francis, hangs on the refrigerator door in my mom’s kitchen. I was visiting my mom last weekend to celebrate her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday and saw the quote again. It reads, “Preach the gospel. If necessary, use words.” In the week ahead, let us look for opportunities to preach the gospel in all we do and say, performing good works and random acts of kindness, especially for those who might be feeling neglected, alone, and discouraged. It might make all the difference in the world for someone.

Peace be with you and yours,  
Mark Thompson, church council president



SERVICE OF THE WORD  
GATHERING

**WELCOME**

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer. **Amen.** God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion.

Fountain of living water,

**Pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.**

Beloved, God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus. **Amen.**

**Opening Hymn:** *Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart, vs. 1 & 4* Hymn #800 –Kelli Watson

**Vs. 1** Spirit of God, descend upon my heart; wean it from earth, through all its pulses move; stoop to my weakness, strength to me impart, and make me love you as I ought to love.

**Vs. 4** Teach me to love you as your angels love, one holy passion filling all my frame: the baptism of the heav'n descended dove, my heart an altar, and your love the flame.

**Prayer of the Day**

Holy God, through your Son you have called us to live faithfully and act courageously. Keep us steadfast in your covenant of grace, and teach us the wisdom that comes only through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**First Reading:** Exodus 20:1-17

**Second Reading:** 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

**Gospel:** John 2:13-22

**Sermon:** *The Temple of His Body*

-Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth

What is Jesus doing in this story and why? This is not an easy one to answer, but I believe the answer matters, because whatever Jesus is doing here, quite early in his ministry as John tells it, is core to his mission -it is what he was trying to show people through his actions and words.

In the other gospels, this story is one of the last actions Jesus does that seems to get him in trouble with the political and religious authorities, and not surprisingly so. But John puts this story near the beginning of the Gospel. The Gospel starts out announcing that Jesus is the incarnate Word of God. Jesus turns water into wine at Cana, he starts recruiting a few disciples, and then he goes to the temple in Jerusalem and flips the tables. What's going on? He has hardly done anything else yet, and now he's creating a public disturbance at the heart of the public economic and religious life. He makes a whip and drives the animals out of the temple, and he dumps the coins of the moneychangers on the floor and overturns the tables. What is happening?

First, I think we need to say what is not happening. Jesus is not "cleansing the temple." That phrasing makes it seem that he just wants to fix up the business practices going on there or that he wants to purify the sacrificial system, as if the point were either a reform of business ethics or a focus on the true meaning of sacrifice that had somehow been lost in the emphasis on the rules. Jesus does not throw over the tables to get rid of corruption, or to say the religious practices of his culture need to be improved.

What Jesus is doing is trying to show something about where God is and how and where human relationship with God occurs. He is doing two things:

First, Jesus is announcing through his action that the temple, with its institution of sacrificial victims, is finished as a mediator of God to human beings. He disrupts the transactions involved to show that this system needs to go. As he says some verses later to the woman at the well: the worship of God is neither on a mountain nor at the temple in Jerusalem. These specific, designated locations, especially where they are controlled by political and economic power dynamics, do not define or constrain the dwelling place of God.

Second, and more importantly, he is announcing where God is to be found. The whole Gospel of John is the answer to this question: Where is God? And John's answer? Jesus is God dwelling among us. There is no need for the system that the temple serves, the sacrificial system, because the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is here, living among us. Jesus doesn't say, "The temple is finished, and good riddance." He says, "The temple is finished, and I will take its place." That's an outrageous claim.

Not only that, it's all the outrageous claims of the Gospel of John rolled into one. This story of Jesus throwing over the tables in the temple is the story of the incarnation. "The Word became flesh and lived among us." But also, this story is about the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. As John also says, "he was speaking of the temple of his body." It is in Jesus' body that the world's relationship with God plays out. That body bore pain and suffering, was raised up by God in three days, ascended, and now lives on in the body of Christ, the presence and promise of God alive in the world.

Jesus symbolically shuts down the temple to announce that the new holy place where God meets God's people is.... A human body, his body. He announces that a human body – like your body or mine – is the holy place of God. Jesus was not just "wearing" a human body like a set of clothes. He *was* a human body, as inseparable from his body as you are from yours. And God was inseparable from him. This is simply shocking, and outrageous. But talking about bodies often is outrageous.

Perhaps few times in our lives as Christians have we ever realized so fully what it means to worship not in a building or a place but in "spirit and truth" than during this past pandemic year. We have been stretched and grown to see just what Jesus means about where worship of God really occurs. And yet, perhaps our worship of God has never been quite so disembodied. We see only each other's heads in these Zoom boxes, not whole bodies. We are separated from the whole of the world much of the time, more restricted to the same four walls than most of us have ever been. We have not been at the table where we enact our meeting with Jesus' body together with food and wine.

And yet, disembodiment of our Christian faith is nothing new. How rarely do we dance and move about in our worship with our whole bodies? Often our religion is about our thoughts, our brains, ideas, and disembodied practices. But Jesus spoke of his body. Do we? Are we paying enough attention to our bodies? I don't mean their shape or size or age or beauty. I mean the pain, the worry, the anger, the need, exhaustion, the movement, and yes, the joy, the peace, the delight, the surprise, and the familiarity they bear. As we journey through Lent, *how can we stay connected to Jesus-to his body-through our bodies?*

As someone who is neither a yoga instructor nor a health care professional, I am not sure I ever used the word "body" out loud in my life as much as I did this past year, when talking about the Black Lives Matter movement after George Floyd was killed. I had long talked about white supremacy and Black people. But suddenly, for me the heart of the issue was so clearly about the way white *bodies* took up more than their share of space and value in the world, and the harm and danger that meant for Black and brown *bodies*. The first few times I used the word *body* or *bodies* several times in a sentence out loud, were slightly, secretly scandalized. That's when it hit me that we generally just don't talk enough about our bodies, though we are truly not just the *body* of Christ, but the *bodies* of Christ, the ones he saves, loves, joins together, and goes to the grave, and births into new life.

I love a chapter from Barbara Brown Taylor's book, An Altar in the World, where she writes about the spiritual practice of "wearing skin." She says that she thinks it's important to pray naked in front of a full-length mirror sometimes. Why? Because God loves flesh and blood and chose to dwell in a body. She says to look at what's there, what it has been through and say, "Here I am. I live here. This is my soul's address." How's that for a Lenten spiritual practice this year?

Taylor also shares her surprise about the first time she encountered a hymn written by Brian Wren that I associate with the Gospel of John and with the affirmation that we worship God in spirit and truth, but God dwells in a body. The hymn is called "Good is the Flesh."

Good is the flesh that the Word has become,  
good is the birthing, the milk in the breast,  
good is the feeding, caressing and rest,  
good is the body for knowing the world,  
Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

Good is the body for knowing the world,  
sensing the sunlight, the tug of the ground,  
feeling, perceiving, within and around,  
good is the body, from cradle to grave,  
Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

Good is the body, from cradle to grave,  
growing and aging, arousing, impaired,  
happy in clothing, or lovingly bared,  
good is the pleasure of God in our flesh,  
Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

Good is the pleasure of God in our flesh,  
longing in all, as in Jesus, to dwell,  
glad of embracing, and tasting, and smell,  
good is the body, for good and for God,  
Good is the flesh that the Word has become.

As you pray through this coming week of Lent, remember that the closest thing each of us has, during “remote worship,” to physical proximity to the body of Christ, is *a physical body, the one we each have*. A friend once reminded me that “God is nearer to you than the air that passes through your lungs.” God gets close to us not just through our hearts and minds, metaphorically speaking, but through our bodies~our hunger, our aches, our laughing, our arms raised high, our stretches, our shivers, our angry, flushed faces, our racing pulses~ all the places we meet the God who loves bodies. God chose a human body, flesh in which to dwell among us. Jesus was speaking of the temple of his body, the place we meet him, again and again, in spirit and truth, in flesh and blood.

### **Apostles’ Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*ANTHEM* What A Friend We Have in Jesus, by Charles C. Converse, arr. by Glenda Austin Kelli Watson

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

There is no God before you. Purify the faith of your church, that your people place their trust in nothing beside you. Your name is holy. Guide your church, that in every situation your people’s words and actions honor your name. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Your foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Fill leaders with the foolishness of your peace and mercy. Your law defends the vulnerable. Work through legislators, judicial systems, and systems of law enforcement to protect the wellbeing and freedom of all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Your weakness is stronger than human strength. Protect those who are vulnerable and give courage to all who are suffering. Defend victims of crime and bring redemption to those who have harmed others. Give sabbath rest to all who labor. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Listen to the cries of your people waiting patiently for your healing hand and comforting Spirit, especially those who suffer with chronic pain and all cancer patients, Pr. Mary Etta, Gail, Doris, comfort for Patsy, Claudia, Bill & Rusty, Don & Wanda, Sara, Rosemary, Jeanette & Kjell and family, Rani and family, Kelly, Claudia & Fran, Edie Marie, Ed and family, prayers for Michael Gilleece and family, Your Neighbors clients, Theresa, and our country, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Thanksgiving at the Table**

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all. In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory. Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all glory and honor, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:** *The Glory of These Forty Days vs. 1 & 4* Hymn #320 -Kelli Watson

**Vs. 1** The glory of these forty days we celebrate with songs of praise; for Christ, through whom all things were made, himself has fasted and has prayed.

**Vs. 4** Then grant, O God, that we may, too, return in fast and prayer to you. Our spirits strengthen with your grace, and give us joy to see your face.

### **Blessing**

You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you that you may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. **Amen.**

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

*Thank you for being with us today on this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent!*



***March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018***

*I can't believe it's been three years since I started working here at Zion. What a blessing it is to have this place to come to everyday for work. Even working from home for six months during the pandemic, we managed to keep going.*

*My kids were ages 7 & 11 when I started here; now they are 10 & 14!*

*Council leaders, committees, and members, thank you for being an example of love and patience, kindness and generosity.*

*This is such a beautiful church. Thank you for being so good to me!*

*Faithfully, Sara Silva, Office Manager*

## **Souper Bowl Deliveries**

The total number of soup cans & boxed food received was 503.

*Then, we realized one of those cans was what Carole had bought for her supper!*

So, after that was retrieved, it was 502!

It has been distributed to SEVEN Food Pantries around Utica.

These include: Seeds of Hope at First Presbyterian, Utica Food Pantry, St. Margaret's Pantry at Grace Episcopal, Mother Marianne's Kitchen, Theo Bowman Pantry East Utica, St. John Pantry West Utica, and The Warming Center on Oneida Square.

Those places that offer prepared food were given the large cans of the same type of soup so that they could combine them into a large pot. It is warming (pun intended) to know this soup and other food has gone to those that need and appreciate it. At each delivery site, they conveyed their warm (there it is again) ...

Thank You!

### **The Warming Center at Cornerstone Community Church on Oneida Square**

The Warming Center was set up this year to serve the homeless on the streets of Utica. Cornerstone Community Church, also known as Plymouth Bethesda UCC, received a grant to modify their large fellowship hall into small sleeping quarters for individuals and make changes to allow efficient preparation and serving of large group meals. People who are homeless are invited to come to receive a hot meal, a place to sleep, a breakfast, and leave each day with something for their lunch. They are serving about 20 people per night, with a mix of both men and women. It is nice for us to connect to a service so necessary that is beyond the Food Pantries we already support.

You can look for updates and more details on their Facebook page: [Warming Center Utica](#) or [Cornerstone Community Church](#).

**We will keep you posted on any upcoming information from the  
Lutheran World Relief**