

## *First Saturday Worship Service*

*October 7, 2006*

### **Welcome**

Before we begin this evening I would simply like to welcome each of you. Tonight is a special night in that it is the beginning of a new outreach of the church – in the form of this “Come-as-you-are Saturday evening worship service.” We will be meeting the first Saturday evening of every month for a service of communion with Christ and with one another. The service will be approximately 45 minutes in length and will be followed by a potluck supper downstairs in fellowship. You can participate in one or both – we are just happy that you have chosen to be in community with us tonight. If you are planning to stay for dinner and need transportation downstairs there is a lift in the front foyer of the church.

On an instructional note:

The offering plate will be passed from the front of the church to the back and then from the back to the front.

Communion will be done by intinction. Which means you will come forward and pull a piece of bread off and dip it into either the wine (in the terracotta chalice) or the grape juice (in the ceramic chalice). Before returning to your seat, you are also invited to light a candle if you have a particular concern or celebration you would like to lift up.

Later during the Pastoral Prayer you will hear me say, “Oh Lord, we ask your special blessing upon...” at which time you can speak aloud any prayers that you would like to lift up in community.

All of that having been said...

## **Call to Worship**

*Rejoice* for God is among us.

*Give Thanks* for in Christ we re a new people.

*Sing praise* for we come to worship God.

Let us sing God's praises as we join in singing, "*Here I am to Worship You*"

(Insert)

## **Invocation/Prayer of Confession**

*We are called to examine our faithfulness to God's covenant with us. God, in whose presence we gather, promises us grace and pardon when we acknowledge our weakness and shame. Therefore let us open ourselves to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit as offer our prayers of confession to God, our sovereign. Let us pray.*

Eternal God, we recognize and confess that we have failed to respond fully to your gracious presence in our lives. Through Jesus Christ you have offered us new life, fulfillment, and the freedom to serve you. We confess that we are captive to sin, that our sin binds us with false pride, and that the wrong we do is made worse by the good we leave undone. Reconcile us to you and to all people. God of mercy, forgive all our sin and strengthen us anew for life as you intend it; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Yet in confessing our shortcomings we are assured that you will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And so, Most merciful God, we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. 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.

## **Words of Assurance**

Anyone in Christ becomes a new person altogether; the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new. Friends hear the good news, believe and become anew.

Luke 10.28-38 (*by Brian Lastra*)

<sup>28</sup>And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

<sup>29</sup>But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

<sup>30</sup>Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup>Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup>So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. <sup>34</sup>He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

<sup>35</sup>The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ <sup>36</sup>Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” <sup>37</sup>He said, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Sung Response (On Bulletin)

## **Call to Offering**

This is a crazy world we live in – Children are killing children, politicians are using their power to seduce teens into sex, more money is being funneled into “Fighting terror” (which sounds like an oxymoron to me) than is being directed toward reducing global warming, and the list goes on.

Thanks goodness for Christ. For in Christ we find a new hope – and a new vision - of how the world can be. Let us work toward that new vision as we prepare Christ's table with the offerings of our life and labor. Let us continue our worship as we present with joy - gifts of commitment and support for the work of Christ's church.

### **Prayer of Dedication**

Blessed are you, O Lord, Creator of all things.

As we gather this morning, we offer you thanks and praise for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ,

who taught us what it means to truly be in service to you.

We thank you to for your continual presence in our lives, especially when we feel undeserving and alone. (Pause.)

Through your goodness,

we have been blessed with the opportunity to worship you freely and offer back yet a portion of thy bounty.

We ask that you bless these gifts – and multiple them

just as you have multiplied the blessings in each of our lives.

As we place these gifts before you, oh Lord,

we also offer ourselves to your service

and dedicate our lives to the care of all your children.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

### Walking Beside the Road

One of the requirements at Lancaster Seminary is a cross-cultural experience in an economically oppressed environment. The trip that I went on was to Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Now I have to tell you that I was not excited about this trip – and if the truth be known I would have done whatever I could to get out of it

because my children were 4 and 5 and I did not want to be away from them for a month. But I had no choice if I wanted to get my degree. So I packed up. I packed socks and shoes, deodorant and shampoo, wrinkle resistant clothes and power bars... But I also brought along a few extra things – I brought a middle class upbringing in a white world, I brought an unconscious sense of entitlement, and let's not forget the stereotypes about poor Hispanics – particularly Hispanic men.

So with my bags all packed I headed I Central America. While there we visited many places – missions that provided child care, food, elder care, seminary and career training for women. We stayed in the dirt homes of villagers and ate chicken that had been cook over an open fire. We worshipped at churches that celebrated communion with punch from a Sippy cup. (And we complain when the candles on lit). We watched people walk five miles on the dark dirt road to worship. (And we have trouble rolling out of bed and driving here on Sunday mornings.)

Well one day we went to a construction sight. And while tramping through the mud, my foot struck something. It was the mouth of a bottle. So I began to dig it out with my heel – all the while thinking that it was a discarded whisky bottle that some poor drunk had tossed on the ground. When I was done, this is what I found. It wasn't whisky after all. It was a cologne bottle. It was bottle of fragrances meant to mask the scent of poverty – and because they had no garbage pick-up, much less recycling, it had been buried. In that moment I prayed that such prejudices might be permanently buried. (Pause)

But that is just one of many stories like it. Take for instance, a woman walking through the overgrown grass beside the road - cigarette in her hand; vacant expression on her face, oblivious to the traffic that passes by only feet from her. She is wearing a tattered dress adorned with spangles over a pair of old blue jeans with a visible layer of dirt from the road covering her. It is as if she is trying

to hang on to her femininity and dignity despite her circumstances, or perhaps she like many of us is trying to be something she is not. Much like a child carries a blanket, she has a bedroll tucked under her arm.

Something on the ground catches her eye. It is a discarded can of soda. After inspecting its contents she decides to keep it for the 5 cents it will bring. She makes it to the park. There is a carousel nearby. She takes a seat on a bench and listens to the music. It reminds her of a tune that played on a music box she had been given for her fifth birthday.

My... how life had changed.?

Lost in the music, she stares at the carousel until it comes to a stop. She notices a little girl get off her horse and walk out into the crowd. Her mother, chatting on the other side of the ride doesn't see that the ride has stopped. Confident that she will be able to find her mom, the little girl treks through the jungle of legs until she stops bewildered in front of the bench and begins to cry. "What's wrong?" asks the rag-tag. Between heaving sobs the little girl manages to tell her that she has lost her mother. "Why don't we try to find her." So they set out – hand in hand – to find the girl's mother. No sooner had they gone ten feet than an over zealous security officer tells the woman to "Let go of the girl's hand and freeze." Raising the hand that is still clasped to the frightened little girl, the woman retorts - "But I was only..." "I said let go of her hand and freeze." Seeing her mother racing up behind the officers, the little girl runs straight into her mother's outstretched arms.

Hands grasping the back of the bench, the homeless woman was patted down in front of a group of accusing onlookers. In that moment she was reminded of who she was – she could no longer pretend to be something she wasn't – She was not a woman, but a vagrant, undeserving of dignity and respect.

Or is she??? Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

Guilt and shame are but some of the emotions that we heap on people when we refrain to heed Christ's call to discipleship.

When we refrain from supporting soldiers who have fought a war that someone else set into motion, while we have enjoyed the comforts of home.

When we allow insurance premiums to soar while the elderly live on fixed incomes.

When we engage in acts of war (certainly not terrorism) in an effort to promote world peace and freedom.

When we allow people to live on welfare rather than finding ways to helping them become self-supporting.

When we choose one-stop-shopping over supporting the little guy.

If you live by the principle you reap what you sow, then why are thousands of innocent civilians dying in the name of freedom. And if we have a problem with those people on welfare why aren't we doing more to break the cycle than providing free lunches and insurance for the children.

The beauty of being Protestant (and being an American for that matter) is believing that we have the ability to make choices.

What if the kingdom of God is NOW? What if its NOW – walking beside the road?

If that doesn't work for you, consider this... If you were to die right now – this very minute – and God asked, "What have you done with the life I gave you?" What would you say? (Long Pause)

As we consider this, let us – in gathering around this communion table - also consider the depth and breadth of God’s love for us. For we celebrate an open communion. All who wish to know the presence of Christ and to share in the community of God’s people are welcome. Let us draw near to God in our prayer of thanksgiving: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of the glory: Glory be to thee O Lord most high. Through the birth, the life the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you have indeed opened for us a new and holy way to live together in your presence. Grant to us who have gathered here (to share the bread and cup) that our lives may be truly yielded to the influence of your Holy Spirit and our hearts opened in deep affection to you and to one another. Sanctify these common elements of bread and cup, which we consecrate to a sacred use; that they may be for us a reminder of Christ’s sacrifice for us. By the sharing of this sacrament strengthen our faith, we pray and renew us in the fellowship of Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Words of Institution**

We remember that on the night that our Lord Jesus Christ on the eve of his death, took the bread and after he had given thanks for it, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, “This is my body which is broken for you.” (Pause) When we share the broken bread we participate in the body of Christ.

In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.” (Pause) When we share this cup of blessing we participate in the new life Christ gives.

Friends, Jesus said, “I am the true vine says the Lord, abide in me, and I will abide in you.” Come – abide in Christ – for all things are ready.

Diane and Jim play.

**Pastoral Prayer:** Let us pray. O God, Our Faith in Ages Past, Our Strength in Years to Come, we thank you for redeeming us from lives of sin and loneliness. Through Christ Jesus we have been raised from the dead and resurrected into new life. Help us, to live each day to the fullest; leaving behind the pursuit of unbridled power and unjust profit. Forgive us for identities grounded in something other than your love. Help us to be more like the Samaritan – generous, kind and thoughtful. Help us to be less about us - and more like Christ – self-less and giving. And guide us in living as those who are freed and forgiven.

Source of Healing, we pray for the many hurts that we have - some known only by you. For those with troubled relationships, for those of us whose loved ones are sick and those of us who are ill ourselves, for those whose feelings have been deeply wounded by others, for those who are financially strapped or seeking employment, for victims of domestic violence and the horror of war – for all of this and more we quiet our hearts now and seek to draw near to you.

Oh Lord, we ask your special blessing upon...

Touch these people's lives with your strong and powerful hand – offering them your touch that sustains, renews and recreates. May your love and care give them strength and hope.

Eternal Ruler, we know that you love justice and peace – but greed, violence and hatred scar our human family. Send your Spirit to renew the earth and teach us the mercy of Christ so that peace may fully reign. Grant each of us - and those in positions of leadership or authority the wisdom and courage to make this possible.

Oh God of life, your throne is surrounded by saints who were welcomed by your great love. We give thanks for their lives and witness, and ask that we may faithfully follow their example. And as we wait for the full harvest of your spirit,

we humbly ask for your continued love and guidance as we seek to walk in the path of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, who lives and reigns with you forever, Amen.

Closing Music

The Gift of Love

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**Benediction and Passing of the Peace**

Blessing and honor, glory and power  
be unto you and those you love.

May the peace of the Lord be with you -

Before we adjourn to dinner, let us greet one another with a sign of peace.