



Community of Faith Presbyterian Church Sunday, August 20, 2023

Toll free conference call number (844) 855-4444, access code 654132#
Worship will also be connected through Facebook Live

Welcome and Announcements Lighting of the Christ Candle Centering Music

+Call to Worship

If you come into this place with the hope of growing deeper,
with the hope of connecting, with the hope of glimpsing God,
and if all of those things take place, and your spirit is moved,
and you swear God is near, and you feel more than lucky for the gift of faith,
and then the service comes to an end, and it's time for you to leave,
and you ask yourself, "Where do we go from here?"
Then I would say to you, "Go out into the world
to love and to share and to learn, but come back soon,
because this is the beginning. This is only the beginning.
So come on in. Fill your cup here. Be present here. God is here."
Let us worship Holy God.

+Hymn *Here in This Place (Gather Us In) #401*

Call to Confession

One of the things I love about the prayer of confession is it allows us to claim that we are works in progress, and there is beauty in that. You don't have to be perfect here. You don't have to have it all figured out here. You don't have to have a five-step plan for what's next here. You just have to show up with your messy, beautiful self, and be honest. So friends, let us be honest. Let us pray the prayer of confession together. . .

Prayer of Confession

Holy God, We are naturals when it comes to stalling out. We reach a certain point in the relationship, in the conversation, in our faith, and then we stall. We buy property on the top of the plateau and build a house there, destined to never dig deeper or climb higher. Forgive us for giving up on the things that matter. Forgive us for confusing the plateau with the mountain top. Forgive us for taking the easy way out instead of doing the hard work of curiosity, relationship-building, vulnerability, and connection. Inspire us to see new paths for where we can go from here. With hope and honesty we pray, Amen.
(time for silent reflection)

Assurance of Forgiveness

Family of faith, We are works in progress, but we are works in progress designed, created, and claimed by God. No matter what you have done or left undone this week, today is a fresh start. Hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

**God is with me on the mountain top, and God is with me on the plateau.
I am loved, claimed, and forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Sung Response *Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me v1 #582*
*Glory to God whose goodness shines on me, and to the Son whose grace has pardoned me,
And to the Spirit whose love has lifted me, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be.*

Special Music

Hearing the Word

Prayer for Illumination

Holy God, we know that you are always speaking—through strangers and friends, through sunrise and sunset, through random acts of kindness and feelings that stir hope awake in us. We know that you speak through dreams and prayer, through a still, small voice and bursts of overwhelming joy. We know that you are always speaking, but we also know that we are inclined to miss it. Settle our spirits now to hear your word fully. We want to be part of the conversation. Gratefully we pray, Amen.

Scripture Reading Acts 10 In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort, as it was called. ²He was a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God. ³One afternoon at about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius." ⁴He stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" He answered, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter; ⁶he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside." ⁷When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him, ⁸and after telling them everything, he sent them to Joppa.

⁹About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. ¹²In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." ¹⁵The voice said to him again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." ¹⁶This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven. ¹⁷Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon's house and were standing by the gate. ¹⁸They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there.

¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three men are searching for you. ²⁰Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them." ²¹So Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?" ²²They answered, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say." ²³So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging. The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴The following day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

Hymn *In Christ There is No East or West #317*

Acts 10, continued. On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand up; I am only a mortal." ²⁷And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; ²⁸and he said to them, "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. ²⁹So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?" ³⁰Cornelius replied, "Four days ago at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me. ³¹He said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³²Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' ³³Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say."

³⁴Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, ⁴⁶for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷"Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Sermon

Responding to the Word

Affirmation of Faith

We believe that God is a conversationalist, drawing close to us and asking, "What do you need? Where does it hurt? Who do you long to be?" We see this conversational God in Jesus Christ, God's own flesh, who walked the earth speaking with the poor, the hungry, the lonely, and the outcast. Therefore, we believe that our call as people of faith is to continue this holy conversation with those who look and think like us, as well as with those who share little in common with us. We believe that through these conversations, we are able to catch a glimpse of the Kingdom of God, so we continue the conversation in hope. Amen.

Invitation to Generosity

You give us so much and we are so grateful God, so out of gratitude to you we want to give something back, something that will bring hope to our neighbors near and far. Whether we give online or through the offering plate, through our time or our talents, we give from the bottom of our hearts. Amen.

Sung Response *In the Lord I'll be Ever Thankful #654*

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful; in the Lord I will rejoice!

Look to God, do not be afraid.

Lift up your voices; the Lord is near. Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

God of conversation, we are here, trying to be courageous. We are trying to be curious. We are here trying to build connections in this lonely and isolated world. We want to be somewhere other than here. We want to be standing in a place and time that is closer to your promised day— where all are fed, the prisoners are freed, the homeless are housed, and every person knows their worth.

And we know we can't get there without honest and vulnerable conversation, but we don't always know what to ask. We fear saying the wrong thing. We fear offending, so we eat our words and stay quiet, hoping that answers will come, but they don't always come. Connection has never been quite so easy for us.

So today we ask for your words. Plant questions in us that, like seeds, grow into a garden of connection. Plant affirmation in us that, like laughter, is contagious and mood-changing. Plant curiosity in us that, like rain, washes away any judgment we carry, replacing it with a desire to understand. And when we have your words in our mouth, and your mind in our hearts, then teach us how to listen. Teach us how to hear the message under the words—the grief, the hurt, the fear, the shame that hangs under sentences like bats under a bridge. Help us to hear and make space for those unspoken truths. Then teach us how to listen to voices that differ from us—voices with different opinions, with different histories, with different perspectives. So that like Ruth and Naomi, Peter and Cornelius), we might move through disagreement and ultimately find you.

God of conversation, we are here, trying to be courageous. We are here, trying to be curious. We are here, trying to build connections. It is easier said than done. We need you like we need this community, like we need the sunrise every morning. So draw near to us. Teach us how to speak. Teach us how to listen. Teach us how to find you in the spaces between our words and our ears. And as you do, hear and receive these prayers...

God of conversation, we've been meaning to ask, "Where do we go from here? How do we speak truth? How do we listen for you?" Guide us. Be with us. Hold us. Unsettle us. Catch us. Feed us. Fill us. Meet us here. God, we are open. Pour into us. Gratefully we pray these things and also the prayer that Christ taught us: ***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.***

Going Into the World

+Hymn *Today We All are Called to Be Disciples #757*

+Blessing

Family of faith, as you leave this place, may God grant you the curiosity to counter assumptions, the vulnerability to befriend, the bravery to speak your truth, the wisdom to listen, the strength to ask for help, the resiliency to choose love, even when it's hard, and the awareness of the Holy Spirit always beside you.

In the name of the Great Connector—Love itself-- go in peace.

COMMUNITY OF FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AUGUST 20, 2023

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Scriptures for Sunday, August 27

Exodus 1:8-2:10
Psalm 124:1-8
Romans 12:1-8
Matthew 16:13-20

In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Betty Murphy
Ruth Roeber
The McDermott family
Johanna Willis
The Kleier family
Jean Jennings' family
Emille Walden
Kelly Montana
Lynda Jaeger
Ron Carlin
Ella Grace Marksberry

Worship Services

Join us for in-person services at 710 Western Reserve Rd., Crescent Springs, KY. You can also worship with us online via Facebook Live, or by joining the conference call. Worship services begin at 11:15 am.

Liturgists Needed

Liturgists are needed to help lead worship. Please sign up on the sheet located on the welcome table. Thank you!

Treasurer Position Opening

The COF session is looking for a new Treasurer. The position of Treasurer is required by the Book of Order, and entails working with our accounting firm to pay bills, manage pledges and offerings, and report to session and the congregation regarding the finances of the congregation. Training will be provided. For further questions or a job description, please contact Rev. Sharon.

Supporting the Work of the Presbytery and the Denomination with Per Capita

Per Capita is a fundamental way in which all of us, as members of the nearly 10,000 congregations and mid councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) connect, participate and share in the work of the wider church. Per capita is the primary source of funding for the Presbytery, as well as the Synod and General Assembly, and is how Presbyterians mutually and equitably share the costs of coming together to discern the Spirit's leading for the future. It is how Presbyterians are trained to become better ruling elders, teaching elders and deacons, and ministers. It is how Presbyterians are helped to discern God's call in their lives. It has supported our ministries at COF through grants to CLASP, Medical Debt Relief, and for equipment purchases for our virtual church services. Please prayerfully consider donating the \$34 per capital apportionment set by the Presbytery, for each church member. *(Adapted from the Presbytery of Cincinnati's newsletter.)*