

St. David's United Church of Christ

7th Sunday Following Pentecost

July 19, 2020, 10:00 AM

WELCOME

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Ever-present God, to whom each of us is fully known, and before whom we bow in awe, grant that we may live as children of Your realm, listening for Your word, responding to Your call, and following the way of Christ. Inspire us to witness to Your glory, bear fruit to benefit all Your children, and grow together in love, that all the world may come to know You and honor Your reign. AMEN

OPENING HYMN: "Nearer, My God, to Thee" (*Sara Flower Adams, 1841*)
(*Tune: Bethany, Mason*)

- 1 Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee;
Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
- 2 Though like the wanderer, daylight all gone,
Darkness be over me, my rest a stone;
Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my God, to thee;
Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
- 3 There let the way appear, steps unto heav'n;
All that thou sendest me, in mercy giv'n;
Angels to beckon me
Nearer, my God, to thee;
Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
- 4 Then, with my waking thoughts bright with thy praise,
Out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;
So by my woes to be
Nearer, my God, to thee;
Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
- 5 Or if, on joyful wing cleaving the sky,
Caught up to meet my King, swiftly I'll fly,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee;
Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE with MISS DEE

CALL TO CONFESSION

When we run away from our problems, we discover that we cannot run away from ourselves. Yet God is present with us to hear our confession and offer forgiveness. God brings us back to face what we have left behind in order that we may claim the promise of reconciliation and wholeness.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Search us and test us, that all wickedness may be purged from us, O Creator. Reshape our will to conform with Your intentions for us. We confess that we have allowed weeds to grow in our lives. Our focus has drifted from the harvest You intend to the fears and greed that hold us hostage. Release us from bondage to decay that we may grow in likeness to Jesus Christ. We want to bear fruit for You. Turn us to the brightness of a new day.

TIME OF SILENT PERSONAL CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

We are set free from bondage to death to claim the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Live in the hope God offers, waiting with patience for all that God will yet reveal.

SONG: “*There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy*” (*Frederick W. Faber, 1814-1863*)

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea.
There's a kindness in his justice,
Which is more than liberty

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Vast and open, full and free.
By his kindness, He pardons me.
There’s a wideness in God’s mercy.

There's a welcome for the sinner,
And more graces for the good;
There is mercy with the Savior;
There is healing in his blood.

For the love of God is broader,
Than the measure of man’s mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Vast and open, full and free.
By his kindness, He pardons me.
There’s a wideness in God’s mercy.

*If our love were but more simple;
We would take Him at his Word;
And our lives would be illumined
By the presence of our Lord.*

*There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Vast and open, full and free.
By his kindness, He pardons me.
There’s a wideness in God’s mercy. (Repeat)*

HOLY SCRIPTURES:

ROMANS 8:12–25

¹² Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.

¹³ For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.

¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Future Glory

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

MATTHEW 13:24–30, 36–43

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.

²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.

²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ The owner’s servants came to him and said, “Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?”

²⁸ An enemy did this, he replied. The servants asked him, Do you want us to go and pull them up?

²⁹ No, he answered, because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them.

³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.

³⁷ He answered, the one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.

³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

SERMON: "Reality of Evil"

PASTORAL PRAYER AND 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

BENEDICTION: Scatter to serve, listening for God's direction.

CLOSING HYMN: "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" (*Thomas A. Dorsey*) 1932
George N. Allen (Adapted by Thomas A. Dorsey)

Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, help me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light:
Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home.

When my way grows drear,
Precious Lord, linger near,
When my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call,
Hold my hand lest I fall:
Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home.

REPEAT VERSE 1

HISTORY OF TODAY'S HYMNS:

NEARER MY GOD TO THEE: Sarah Flower Adams was a British actress who received praise for her performance in an 1837 production of Shakespeare's Macbeth. After health problems disrupted her plans to continue with theater, she found comfort in writing poems and hymns.

Her most notable hymn, "Nearer, My God, to Thee," came about in 1841 when Adam's pastor was looking for a hymn for the following week's sermon on Genesis 28:11-19, which is referred to by many as "Jacob's ladder," or "Jacob's dream." Adams offered to write the hymn and completed it within a week to go along with the pastor's sermon. The hymn was originally set to music written by her sister, Eliza Flower, but another hymn-tune called "BETHANY," written by Lowell Mason in 1856, has become most widely recognized and is most familiar to listeners today.

PRECIOUS LORD, TAKE MY HAND: Thomas A. Dorsey wrote "Precious Lord" in response to his inconsolable bereavement at the death of his wife, Nettie Harper, in childbirth, and his infant son in August 1932. (Mr. Dorsey can be seen telling this story in the 1981 gospel music documentary Say Amen, Somebody.) The earliest known recording was made on February 16, 1937, by the Heavenly Gospel Singers (Bluebird B6846). "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" is published in more than 40 languages.

THERE'S A WIDENESS IN GOD'S MERCY: Raised in the Church of England, Frederick W. Faber (b. Calverly, Yorkshire, England, 1814; d. Kensington, London, England, 1863) came from a Huguenot and strict Calvinistic family background. He was educated at Balliol College, Oxford, and ordained in the Church of England in 1839. Influenced by the teaching of John Henry Newman, Faber followed Newman into the Roman Catholic Church in 1845 and served under Newman's supervision in the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. Because he believed that Roman Catholics should sing hymns like those written by John Newton, Charles Wesley, and William Cowpe, Faber wrote 150 hymns himself. One of his best known, "Faith of Our Fathers," originally had these words in its third stanza: "Faith of Our Fathers! Mary's prayers/Shall win our country back to thee." He published his hymns in various volumes and finally collected all of them in Hymns (1862).