



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH *of Lapeer*

Sharing Worship At-Home

Welcome

Why Worship At-Home?

Due to social distancing measures put in place by our Michigan and federal governments, many churches are shifting to at-home worship. In this way, members' health is maintained and civic duty fulfilled, while Christian worship endures. Times like this can be difficult for people physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, and so even though we are suspending in-person worship for safety reasons, we want to maintain worship in our homes and hearts in order to keep our faith alive, our hopes up, our community strong, and our hearts and minds engaged in God's word.

How Do I Use This Packet?

Because we cannot meet in-person to share worship, we are sending worship out to you! We encourage you to use this packet you have in your hands to host worship over the phone with a friend or with those who live with you. Our goal is that, even though we cannot meet physically, by sharing in the same worship activities at the same time, we remain connected spiritually. These things may seem strange at first. But since we do not know how long we will have to suspend in-person events, we believe sharing worship in an unusual way is better than not sharing worship at all. Consider also the very first Christians, who lived long before true church buildings were built: worship at home was all they knew. So in a way, this crisis gives us the chance to return to our ancient Christian roots of house churches. Regardless, worship continues!

What's Inside?

Our Sunday worship guides feature a short Bible study and guided prayer, with scripture as their main focus. While you are welcome to ask more questions about the main scripture and do prayers beyond what we provide, we encourage everyone to at least share in the same baseline together so we can maintain a sense of churchwide unity on Sundays. Our Tuesday worship guides are for use during a midweek meal of your choice and feature an "agape meal," an ancient ritual that eventually became communion as we know it today. Anyone can share such sacred meals celebrating God's love, and we hope this preserves our sacred connections to each other and the Lord, even if we cannot share communion in-person.

Ongoing Service

Here are a few ways our church is keeping active even while in-person worship is suspended.

At-Home Worship: This guide provides worship for us to share together even while apart, and on Thursdays we are hosting a 40-second group devotional over the phone.

Online Worship: We encourage everyone with internet access to watch 1st Presbyterian Church of Saginaw's YouTube livestream worship service on Sundays at 10:25am. No account is needed to view this it.

Giving: You can donate online on our website by clicking "Give" in the upper right corner. Or you can mail in a giving envelope as normal.

Soup Kitchen & Food Pantry: We are shifting to a takeout-style for these programs so people can get food while still avoiding infection. Volunteers and donations are appreciated.

Calls: We should call each other often over the coming weeks to maintain church community.

Sunday, March 22

Call to Worship: Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Person 1: Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

Person 2: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Person 1: Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.

Person 2: Recite them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

Both: May we remember God's love and call always!

Scripture: John 9

Read today's scripture out of your home Bible, taking turns reading each verse of the chapter.

Exploring God's Word

- 1) The disciples, blind man, and Pharisees all have different ideas about what Jesus is. What does each group think? What reasons would they have to think that? What does this scripture suggest Jesus is to you?
- 2) Both Jesus' disciples and the Pharisees assume a connection between the blind man's physical suffering and sin. What does Jesus think about any link between the man's physical condition and any spiritual agenda? Does that illuminate anything about your own life?
- 3) This scripture features characters seeing in new ways. Has your view of God ever changed? What inspired that shift in your understanding? How was God with you in that?

Prayer: Psalm 23

Settle into a moment of silence to collect and prepare yourself for prayer. Slowly read through the psalm, pausing after each verse to allow time to experience and understand the words. Then slowly read through the psalm a second time, with your heart open to hear how your own life fits into the scripture. Slowly read through the psalm a third time, making it into a prayer from you personally to God. Finally, slowly read through the psalm a fourth time, listening for how God is calling you to respond to this moment of worship today. End your prayer time however you need.

Final Blessing: 2 Peter 1:2

Say to each other, "May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus, our Lord." And return to your lives, ready to receive God's love and do God's will.

Tuesday, March 24

Call to Worship: *Luke 11*

Person 1: When Jesus ate supper with Mary and Martha, Mary learned at Jesus' feet while Martha raced about, distracted in preparing her house to host Jesus.

Person 2: When Martha complained about it, Jesus explained, "You are distracted by many things but need only one thing, which Mary already has chosen."

Person 1: We gather in a worshipful meal, yet we bring many distractions and cares.

Person 2: But we need only Jesus himself, who calls to us all as he once called to Mary.

Both: In this time of fellowship and feasting, may we cast all our burdens at Christ's feet to simply learn from Jesus our teacher, healer, Lord, and friend.

Scripture: *Mark 2:13-17*

Read the scripture out of your home Bible twice, taking turns reading each verse of the passage.

Sharing an Agape Meal

Enjoy your meal as usual with all gathered to share this devotional with you, whether in-person or over the phone and whether it be breakfast, lunch, dinner, or a snack. Agape meals are meant to be times of sacred togetherness, so we encourage you to talk about the scripture for today, to share prayer joys and concerns with each other, to talk about how you've seen God at work in your life or the world in the last week, your own Christian journey over the years, or anything else you desire. The focus of agape meals is to celebrate God's love, as revealed in scripture, in the world, and in our lives, so whatever you talk about, we hope it draws you nearer to God and each other.

Closing Prayer

Take turns reading sentences in the following prayer, giving silent time between each sentence for individual prayer: "*Jesus Christ, long ago you shared a loaf of bread with your disciples. You said, 'This is my body given for you. Share this in remembrance of me.'* And you gave a cup to your disciples, telling them, '*This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood. As often as you drink it, do so in remembrance of me.*' Today as we share this meal, we remember your life, your lessons, your sacrifice, and your redeeming victory over death. Just as what we eat and drink give us life and strength, we pray you give us your grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, that we might live and be strong as Christians. Trusting in your grace, we lift up all these prayers in your name, as we say together the prayer you taught us... [recite the Lord's Prayer in unison]"

Sunday, March 29

Call to Worship: *Psalm 130*

Person 1: Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my prayers!

Person 2: If you, O Lord, should count our sins, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

Person 1: I wait for the Lord. My soul waits, and in his word I hope. My soul waits for God more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

Person 2: O people, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.

Both: It is God who will redeem us from all our sins.

Scripture: *John 11:1-45*

Read today's scripture out of your home Bible, taking turns reading each verse of the passage.

Exploring God's Word

- 1) What does this scripture say about Jesus' relationship with Mary, Martha and Lazarus? How do you think they felt about his delay in visiting? Once he arrived? After his miracle? Do you ever feel any of those ways about Jesus? How does this scripture speak to those moments?
- 2) Jesus knows Lazarus will come back to life, yet Jesus still seems very upset by his death. Do you relate to that feeling at all? Given that Jesus is God, what does it mean for us that our God wept and mourned over the death of his friend's brother? What does it say about grief?
- 3) Compare your spiritual life to Lazarus' story. Where are you right now spiritually? Still in the grave? Watching the stone be rolled away? Outside but still wrapped in burial clothes? Alive and unwrapped? How might God change that for you? What can you change to get there too?

Prayer: *Amazing Grace*

For as many verses as you can remember, sing *Amazing Grace*. Then turning to God in prayer, make the lyrics your own prayer to God. After each verse, leave time for silent prayer and rotate speaking so everyone has a chance to lead. End this time by reciting the Lord's Prayer in unison.

Final Blessing: *Ephesians 5:8, 14*

Say to each other, "*Once you were darkness, but in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light! So rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine light on you!*"

Tuesday, March 31

Call to Worship: *Psalms 100*

Person 1: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

Person 2: Worship the Lord with gladness. Come into God's presence with singing!

Person 1: Know that the Lord is God. It is God who made us, and we are his. We are God's people, the sheep of his pasture.

Person 2: Enter God's gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to God, and bless His name.

Both: For the Lord is good. His love endures forever and His faithfulness to all generations.

Scripture: *John 6:5-15, 26-35*

Read the scripture out of your home Bible twice, taking turns reading each verse of the passage.

Sharing an Agape Meal

Enjoy your meal as usual with all gathered to share this devotional with you, whether in-person or over the phone and whether it be breakfast, lunch, dinner, or a snack. Agape meals are meant to be times of sacred togetherness, so we encourage you to talk about the scripture for today, to share prayer joys and concerns with each other, to talk about how you've seen God at work in your life or the world in the last week, your own Christian journey over the years, or anything else you desire. The focus of agape meals is to celebrate God's love, as revealed in scripture, in the world, and our lives, so whatever you talk about, we hope it draws you nearer to God and each other.

Closing Prayer

Take turns reading sentences in the following prayer, giving silent time between each sentence for individual prayer: *"God of all creation, you make the sun rise on both good and bad and the rain to fall on just and unjust. So hear our prayers for your Church and world. For the hungry and over-fed: may we together have enough. For those who mourn and those who scoff: may we find joy together. For victims and oppressors: may we share power wisely. For peacemakers and war-mongers: may clear truth and stern love lead us to harmony. For the silenced and those who speak wrongly: may we learn to speak our words in wisdom and truth. For the unemployed and the overworked: may we all leave a mark on this earth of love and righteousness. For the troubled and the comfortable: may we work together as wounded healers. For the homeless and the pampered: may our homes be simple, warm and welcoming. For the flourishing and the dying: may we all die to sin and live to love. May we all remember our hope and unity rest in Christ. Trusting in that same Christ, we say the prayer he taught us, saying... [recite the Lord's Prayer in unison]"*

Palm Sunday, April 5

Call to Worship: *Psalm 118:1, 24-26, 29*

Person 1: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. God's steadfast love endures forever!

Person 2: This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Person 1: Save us, we pray to you, O Lord. O Lord, we pray, give us victory!

Person 2: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Both: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. God's steadfast love endures forever!

Scripture: *Matthew 21:1-11*

Read today's scripture out of your home Bible, taking turns reading each verse of the passage.

Exploring God's Word

- 1) In ancient days, kings rode donkeys in parades, rather than warhorses, when they wanted to signal peace. What does it mean for Jesus to be a king of peace? How does that give us hope?
- 2) Karl Barth once remarked, "*A real donkey was permitted to carry Jesus to Jerusalem. If I have done anything in this life of mine, I have done it as a relative of the donkey that back then went its way carrying an important burden. The disciples had said to its owner: 'The Lord has need of it'. And so it seems to have pleased God to use me at this time, just as I was.... I just happened to be on the spot.*" With Barth's words in mind, what is the "donkey" outlook Christians should hold? How does speak to our relationship to Jesus? To other people?
- 3) In your own life experiences, what makes parades special? In our daily lives, what are big ways we can celebrate Jesus that are special or meaningful like a parade? Small ways? Other ways?

Prayer

Read the following prayer aloud, with pauses for silent prayer between each sentence:

"Jesus, you are the good shepherd and king of kings! May the branches swaying on trees outside remind us of your triumphant parade into Jerusalem long ago. May they remind us that you are our prince of peace. May they remind us that Christ the king conquered death and now reigns eternally in life. Though the cheers of life's parade crowds are loud, we pray that you silence in us every voice but your own, that we might hear the call of Jesus for our lives. As Christ lead the parade on Palm Sunday, lead us through this life of faith. Trusting in Christ, we now recite the prayer he taught us, as we say together... [recite the Lord's Prayer in unison]"

Final Blessing:

Say to each other, "*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord and your neighbors!*"

Tuesday, April 7

Call to Worship:

Person 1: A table is set before us. A feast is prepared for us.

Person 2: The Lord calls us to a supper of remembrance.

Person 1: The Lord calls us to serve and to be served.

Person 2: As we break this bread and share this cup, our understanding may fail us.

Both: But we will never forget Christ's example. We will never forget the extent of His love.

Scripture: John 13:1-17, 31-35

Read the scripture out of your home Bible, taking turns reading each verse of the passage.

Sharing an Agape Meal

Enjoy your meal as usual with all gathered to share this devotional with you, whether in-person or over the phone and whether it be breakfast, lunch, dinner, or a snack. Agape meals are meant to be times of sacred togetherness, so we encourage you to talk about the scripture for today, to share prayer joys and concerns with each other, to talk about how you've seen God at work in your life or the world in the last week, your own Christian journey over the years, or anything else you desire. The focus of agape meals is to celebrate God's love, as revealed in scripture, in the world, and our lives, so whatever you talk about, we hope it draws you nearer to God and each other.

Closing Prayer

Take turns reading sentences in the following prayer, giving silent time between each sentence for individual prayer: *"God of grace, we give you thanks for the feast of redemption we have shared tonight. We thank you for the final meal Christ shared with his disciples, when our Lord made ordinary bread and wine into a blessing and revelation. Bread is made from many grains yet becomes one loaf. Wine comes from many vines but becomes one cup. In the same way, we your people come from many walks of life and histories, yet we are united by your grace across distance and time. This meal we have shared tonight has nourished our bodies, and our souls have been nourished by conversation. But this week, with Easter on the horizon, we most of all thank you for nourishing us with your love. Strengthened by your grace, enable our lives to proclaim your great love to the world in all that we say, do, and are. Hear all these prayers, those spoken as well as those quietly held in our hearts, as we now say together the prayer Christ taught us, saying... [recite the Lord's Prayer in unison]"*

Next Week: *Our church will have made a decision over continuing at-home worship or resume in-person worship by this week. Please call the church office if you have questions (810-664-8565).*