

11/7/21 WORSHIP SERVICE

WELCOME – PASTOR CALEB YODER

Welcome to Alexanderwohl, on this beautiful, warm fall day.

We are gathered here to worship our awesome God that we know through Jesus, and to love Jesus by loving each other in the Spirit of Jesus.

Most of you have figured out that today is not a typical worship service. We have Cynthia Neufeld Smith here as our guest. Cynthia pastored the Southern Hills Mennonite Church in Topeka for 30 years with her husband Roger.

Cynthia is also a gifted musician and served on the committee that developed the *Voices Together* resource. Cynthia will lead us in worship around the theme of reconciliation in which we will hear God's word through Scripture and song, and also get a kind of tour of some of what we have in the new hymnal.

We also are blessed to be led in worship by a number of our own members, both vocalists and instrumentalists, including members of the handbell choir. I'm grateful for the time many of them dedicated in practicing music yesterday morning.

We will be trying out some new flavors this morning. You may find you like some courses of the meal more than others; that's also part of attempting to learn something new together and determine which flavors would add the most to our regular meal.

CALL TO WORSHIP – BASED ON ISAIAH 2:3-4, VT 13

Leader: Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob;

People: *that we may be taught God's ways, and walk in God's paths.*

Leader: For out of Zion goes forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

People: *God will judge between the nations, and will arbitrate for many peoples;*

Leader: they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;

All: *nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war any more.*

INVOCATION – ADAPTED FROM VT 857

Holy God,
you call us together
to reflect on your Word
and our life in your world.

Be with us now
as we sing and pray together,
that we may hear your voice
and understand your way.

*Let your presence be felt at Alexanderwohl,
to those who worship and those who lead,
to those who come with joy and those who come with sorrow.*

This we pray
through Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

MORNING PRAYER – PASTOR LOIS HARDER

Dear God, we're gathered here this morning to worship and praise you. To sing of your greatness, to hear the words of scripture and the words of poets – your faithful people who have set words to music in order to praise you. We're here to offer the prayers of our hearts and to receive comfort and assurance that you are the God of reconciliation. We confess, God, that we are not wise and we don't always know the best ways to be reconciled to you or one another. And sometimes we DO know, but we're not able or willing to humble ourselves, or to be courageous, or to make ourselves vulnerable... there are many twists in our humanity that can create barriers and prevent us from seeking and finding your reconciliation. We ask, God, for the wisdom, the humility, the courage, the sensitivity – whatever it is that we need to be reconciled, as individuals, within our congregation and our community, as your global people around the world.

We pray for brothers and sisters who live in places that are far from reconciled – places where there is war, fear, famine, pollution, political unrest. This morning we pray for those in Ethiopia, especially in the Tigray region where there has been war and famine unfolding for many months. God, we ask for your presence to be felt strongly there, offering comfort and your peace. We pray for global leaders and for all people who are trying to offer concern and care for taking care of this planet. Give your wisdom, God. Give your Spirit of cooperation and compassion for those who are working to care for your earth.

O God, we pray for those who are closer to home. Be with Braxton this week as he goes with his mom and her cousin to Boston for more surgeries. Braxton is getting to be a big boy now who understands more about what he will undergo. O Lord, you know his fear and trepidation; be close to him, wrap him in your Love and Comfort, let him feel your nearness and assurance in very real and comforting ways. We pray also for Josh Hein and his family as they grieve the loss of Josh's grandpa. Sustain them with memories of joy and appreciation. We pray, God, for those who are suffering with covid-19, with RSV or flu. We pray especially for young children and older folks – those who are more susceptible and for whom it might take longer to heal. We pray for full and complete recovery and for your presence and comfort during the recovery. Thank you, God, for wise caretakers and providers who offer treatment and help. We thank you also for the safe and happy arrival of new babies – each one is a miracle! We're especially grateful for the arrival of Kaiden Kye to Jamie and Rick and their extended family.

We thank you, God, for the many miracles you work in our daily lives! Give us eyes to see them and grateful hearts with which to accept them. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

OFFERING PRAYER – ADAPTED FROM VT 1020

God of extravagant mercy,
with hands outstretched
you have poured out
wonder and pleasure and delight,
goodness and beauty and bounty.
So receive these offerings, we pray,
as our witness to your transformation
that is evil and ugly and impoverished,
trivial and wretched and tyrannical,
in our world and in ourselves—
that we, too, may be poured out
for the world. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 5, CEB (PASTORS)

¹⁷ So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation.

The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!

¹⁸ All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ
and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

¹⁹ In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation.

²⁰ So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us.

We beg you as Christ's representatives,

"Be reconciled to God!"

Reading

VT 868

Leader: As a shepherd seeks a lost sheep,

People: so God seeks and saves the lost.

Leader: Like a woman who searches for a lost coin until it is found,

People: so God rejoices over one soul restored to wholeness.

Leader: As a father receives a returning wayward son,

People: so God welcomes us and lets the past be the past.

Leader: therefore let us praise God in thanksgiving that we are received.

SCRIPTURE READING: EPHESIANS 2, CEB (PASTORS)

¹³ But now, thanks to Christ Jesus, you who once were so far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ **Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us.**

¹⁵ He canceled the detailed rules of the Law so that he could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace.

¹⁶ **He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God.**

¹⁷ When he came, he announced the good news of peace to you who were far away from God and to those who were near.

¹⁸ **We both have access to the Father through Christ by the one Spirit.**

PRAYER IN UNISON – LOIS HARDER

O Risen Christ, you breathe your Holy Spirit on us and you tell us: "Peace be yours."

Opening ourselves to your peace – letting it soften the harsh and rocky ground of our hearts – means preparing ourselves to be bearers of reconciliation wherever you may place us.

But you know at times we are at a loss.

So come lead us to wait in silence, to let a ray of hope shine forth in our world.

READING – VT 1048, PASTORS

Written by the Rabbi Harold Kushner

Let the rain come and wash away
the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds
held and nurtured over generations.
Let the rain wash away the memory
of the hurt, the neglect.

**Then let the sun come out and
fill the sky with rainbows.**

**Let the warmth of the sun heal us
wherever we are broken.**

Let it burn away the fog so that
we can see each other clearly,
so that we can see beyond labels,
beyond accents, gender, or skin color.

**Let the warmth and brightness
of the sun melt our selfishness,
so that we can share the joys and
feel the sorrows of our neighbors.**

And let the light of the sun
be so strong that we will see all
people as our neighbors.

**Let the earth, nourished by rain,
bring forth flowers
to surround us with beauty.**

**And let the mountains teach our hearts
to reach upward to heaven. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

Leader: From where we are to where you need us:

All: Jesus, now lead on.

Leader: From the familiarity of what we know to the wonder of what you will reveal:

All: Jesus, now lead on.

Leader: To transform the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom:

All: Jesus, now lead on.

Leader: Because good things have been prepared for those who love God:

All: Jesus, now lead on.