

Worship Resources - **You're Welcome**

4th Sunday of Pentecost, Year A,

28th June, 2020

Romans 6:12-23 CEV / Matthew 10:40-42 CEV

Intro/Prelude - *The Power of Your Love*, Words and music by Geoff Bullock,
arranged by Phillip Kevern, played by Annie Center and
used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246
<https://youtu.be/G7l1KpepyD8>

Welcoming/Announcements

Welcome to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

We continue to monitor the COVID19 situation in our area and we are committed to ensuring the safety of our church members. Our community has not yet reached a point where it is safe to worship in-person, so we will continue to gather online, and continue to explore new options to fellowship virtually.

Part of our tradition is sharing words of peace and welcome with each other when we gather. Since we can't greet each other in person to pass the peace of Christ, let's instead think of those we would like to offer peace, whether those in our church family, or others we can think of who would benefit from the sharing of peace today. Feel free to say their names aloud, to pray for peace for them, or simply think a peaceful thought for them silently, as we listen to the following interlude played by Annie.

Interlude - *Where Can I Turn For Peace*, By Emma Lou Thayne
Arranged by Susan W. Henry,
played by church musician Annie Center
<https://youtu.be/bHq4JPDXH90>

Let's take a deep breath, quiet our minds and hearts, as we light a candle to represent the Spirit among us. (light candle) Let us call ourselves to worship.

Call to Worship

Welcome one another into this moment, for Christ has welcomed us. When we welcome one another, we welcome God. Whenever we extend hospitality to a stranger, we extend hospitality to God. Welcome, Creator God, into our lives. Welcome, Christ our Lord, into our hearts. Welcome, Holy Spirit, in this place. Amen.

Invocation

Welcoming God, welcome us into Your pace of life. Guide us to slow down and breathe deep. Remind us to take off our shoes, to take off what is dragging us or pushing us ahead, for this is a holy space that we are in, right now. Remove the yoke from us and take upon our burdens, so that we might feel the pressure ease from our bodies, minds, and spirits. Invite us into Your presence that is always with us, into this way of being in which we are completely in touch with You, in which we know Your Spirit is in each breath. Welcoming God, thank you for welcoming us into Your way of life. In the name of Jesus, who taught us this way, we pray. Amen.

Our first scripture this morning is from Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul reminds us of God's abundance of grace for us, and our commitment to redirect our energies away from sin, to performing righteous acts.

Epistle Reading **Romans 6:12-23 CEV**

Don't let sin rule your body. After all, your body is bound to die, so don't obey its desires or let any part of it become a slave of evil. Give yourselves to God, as people who have been raised from death to life. Make every part of your body a slave that pleases God.

Don't let sin keep ruling your lives. You are ruled by God's kindness and not by the Law.

What does all this mean? Does it mean we are free to sin, because we are ruled by God's wonderful kindness and not by the Law? Certainly not!

Don't you know that you are slaves of anyone you obey? You can be slaves of sin and die, or you can be obedient slaves of God and be acceptable to him.

You used to be slaves of sin. But I thank God that with all your heart you obeyed the teaching you received from me.

Now you are set free from sin and are slaves who please God.

I am using these everyday examples, because in some ways you are still weak. You used to let the different parts of your body be slaves of your evil thoughts. But now you must make every part of your body serve God, so that you will belong completely to him.

When you were slaves of sin, you didn't have to please God.

But what good did you receive from the things you did? All you have to show for them is your shame, and they lead to death.

Now you have been set free from sin, and you are God's slaves. This will make you holy and will lead you to eternal life.

Sin pays off with death. But God's gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Scripture Video - Romans 6:12-23 - *Slaves Who Do What Pleases God*

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEo2W1avy>

A Time of Prayer

So as we come to our normal time of sharing prayer together from a distance. I have included those concerns shared from my conversations with some of you, in our prayer today. If you have items you would like lifted in prayer, please leave a comment below, or email myself at vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I will make sure to include them next week, as well as send a prayer chain email, unless directed otherwise.

Joys and Concerns

This week, let's keep Grace Edmark and her family in our prayers, as she begins her move to her new apartment in Northaven.

Let's also remember Eileen Birky and her family, as they mourn the loss of an extended family member.

This week, let's also remember those struggling with the isolation of staying home, and the mental challenges that can bring.

And finally, let's continue to keep in prayer all those who are ill with the Coronovirus, and particularly those at risk in states that have seen dramatic rises in infection this week. May their leaders be guided to make wise decisions to ensure the health and safety of all.

Let's bring these concerns, and those we keep in our hearts, to God in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

O Eternal one, we thank you for the record of the biblical witness which documents your love affair with our humankind. We thank you for these words of Jesus which remind us of our need to be welcoming. We thank you that you continually stretch us to reach beyond ourselves.

Stretch us to widen our souls to include others of your children whom we might naturally exclude. Stretch us to grasp for more than we can reach. Stretch us to believe in ourselves and others. Stretch us to support and encourage others. Stretch us to offer a cup of cold water, food, shelter and a safe-haven in your name.

We pray that we might learn the lessons of Christian community. Help us to be instructed by the errors of the past in order that we may be saved from repeating them. Help us to learn exciting new behaviours and new ways. Temper our penchant for holding resentments.

Teach us that life does not have to be marred permanently by resentments. Teach us that life is much more positive and meaningful and satisfying when it is focused on love. Teach

us that forgiveness is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Teach us to build more expansive souls which can reach out and embrace the least of your little ones.

Send your peace and love and overwhelm and transform all of the bitterness and anger which we so often want to hold close to our souls. So lead us in your higher way. For all who suffer and need your special grace we lift up our prayers today. Amen

Our brief, but powerful gospel lesson this morning is Jesus instructing his followers on what true hospitality means, and what it entails. Let's reflect on our own perspective on what being hospitable means, as we listen to this passage from Matthew.

Gospel Reading Matthew 10:40-42 CEV

Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me. And anyone who welcomes me also welcomes the one who sent me.

Anyone who welcomes a prophet, just because that person is a prophet, will be given the same reward as a prophet. Anyone who welcomes a good person, just because that person is good, will be given the same reward as a good person.

And anyone who gives one of my most humble followers a cup of cool water, just because that person is my follower, will surely be rewarded.

Gospel Video Matthew 10:40-42 *Rewards*

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7EGFqb-QrM>

Message – You're Welcome - <https://youtu.be/HxSc6Gz3bYI>

What comes to our minds when we think of hospitality? Is it sayings like “rolling out the welcome mat or red carpet?” In our culture, I think most of us grow up with a sense of what it means to be a good host. There's usually a sense of warm greeting, of ensuring the comfort of our guests. We usually invite them to sit, and often offer them something to drink, to ensure they are not uncomfortable or in need. In some families and traditions, that need to ensure the guest's needs are met, and can go somewhat over the top.

In my time working in Palestine for Christian Peacemaker Teams, we quickly learned that any visits to local families would undoubtedly involve at least drinking tea, if not being fed whatever was available. I recall one trip we made walking through a number of small villages in the hills. As we approached each home, we were greeted and expected to stay for a cup of tea. That day

I kept track of each cup, and by the time we reached our destination, I had consumed 14 cups of tea. While an amusing story, it also highlights the cultural practice that today's gospel reading has its foundation in. Hospitality is a vital part of the way that culture interacts with each other. No matter what grievance you have with someone, if they show up at your door, you show them the same gracious hospitality you would show to anyone else.

An admirable tradition that has its biblical roots in the story of Abraham welcoming the strangers who turned out to be angels in disguise. Yet even the most admirable traditions can become superficial and shallow. I'm sure we've all experienced someone we know, warmly greeting and chatting with an acquaintance, then sharing the dirt on them the minute they leave. Or in my previous example, those who share tea and food and pleasant conversation with a visiting neighbor, may then bad mouth them to others the rest of the week. Even without the negative gossip, often our greetings aren't as genuine as we portray them to be. When we politely ask how someone is doing, are we always ready and engaged if the answer isn't the customary "good" or "fine." I'm sure we've all had those busy days when someone says something different than the polite expectation, and then we need to pull ourselves out of our busy day mindset, and change our focus, and explore the problems they are experiencing. If we're honest with ourselves, we would probably admit that sometimes we feel some resentment in that situation. "Why couldn't they just go with the standard response and keep a stiff upper lip if things are going so well? I don't have time for this today!"

Jesus talks about what it means to truly be hospitable in our gospel lesson this morning. In just a few short sentences of power and compassion, we are challenged to think more deeply about what is meant by welcoming one another. It is only after doing so that we discover the reward that comes from the deep hospitality found in God's welcome of us. Christian faith advocates compassionate welcome that encourages us to trust, to be open, to share, to eschew manipulating others, and to live a way of life that is beyond personal gain. And there is a key to guide us in our expression of welcome. Is that hospitality for me or for them?

When we welcome someone, is it from our sense of what is expected of us, or is it from a genuine concern for the well-being of the other? Our will to achieve caring relationships is often within our grasp, yet all too frequently, if left to our own devices, we fall short of creating and nurturing the genuine relationships in which we develop into the people God calls us to be. Pride, ego, self-doubt, and their kin can keep us from connecting with each other except in self-interested ways. Therefore we need God's guidance in our lives to live in this paradox and fulfill our faith that is based in living in compassionate welcome with one another and extending genuine hospitality. Compassionate welcome means approaching each other through God's lens. This is how we recognize that genuine human relationships emerge from putting the grace-filled hospitality of God's love at the center of our lives and at the center of our relationships. Yet, it can be hard to step outside of our own perspective, our own point of view with its own priorities.

There's a story Irish theologian Siobhan Garrigan tells of visiting a Presbyterian church in Northern Ireland on Sunday while traveling. She was pleased to be greeted at the door by two women, church members, who seemed to invite her into conversation. She soon realized that these women were ushers of some sort, whose job it was to stand at the door of the church and interview newcomers as they arrived. They quietly asked the person's name and the first names of any other approaching strangers who wished to join in the morning worship. Then Siobhan figured out what was happening. Hearing those names, the ushers would draw conclusions about the cultural and religious identity of each. Those with Protestant names were welcomed warmly and shown their seats. Those with apparently Catholic names, the Marias and the Catherines and the Patricks, were told they were surely in the wrong church and sent on their way. Now our initial impression may be that this is a story foreign to North Americans like us, because it is about a faraway congregation of Irish Presbyterians, who are nothing like us at all, still fighting their Protestant-Catholic battles. After all, we have moved past such discriminatory behavior ourselves, right? Confronted with the unsettling behavior of that Protestant church on an Irish hillside, we want to immediately dismiss such boundary keeping as abhorrent to the gospel. Perhaps, however, it is more familiar than we want to admit. The churches that we know would never ask the name of a stranger in some covert attempt to vet them for entry. But if we are to be honest about the church we know, though we define our borders differently, we define them still, more subtly. And maybe "borders" isn't the best term, perhaps "ideal" would be a better choice.

If I had a nickel for every time a church member expressed that "if only we could find some more young families to join us," I'd be a richer man for sure. Certainly we couch that in the sensible reality that young families ensure church membership and resources for a decent period of time. Perhaps though, it's also a subtle way of looking for those who are most like us, most like those we are most comfortable with and can identify the easiest with. After all, that's who we have been for generations, it's the tried and true model that has worked. Even though those people aren't walking through the doors anymore, are we still following the same model of worship that worked in those bygone days when the church was full of young families. What happens when the people that come to visit look very different? How does our welcome and hospitality adapt? It's easy to welcome those who are more like us. We can engage them in what kind of work they do, where they went to school, where they live and what their house is like. It's harder when they don't have a job, when they haven't had the opportunity to attend higher education, or don't even have a roof over their head. It's harder when they may suffer from mental illness or addiction, when they may face real challenges from discrimination because of the color of their skin, or their sexual or gender identity. Yet these are people who are walking through our doors. God's hospitality necessarily entails stepping out of our own comfortable perspective, and stepping into the perspective of another. To practice Christ-like welcome is to be actively engaged in addressing the challenges faced by those we meet, not just giving sympathetic lip service. It's challenging work we are called to. I know as well as anybody how difficult it can be to really reach out and engage with someone who has led a very different life from the one you are familiar with from your own experiences. It's much easier to go by the standard polite greeting script, exchanging the niceties, then going about

your day. It's easier to go about the same old worship script that we all know and are familiar with, even when it's clear that it doesn't work for those who don't have that history, who have different outlooks and life experiences entirely. Being truly welcoming takes work and being open to making change, to doing things differently, and stepping out of ourselves.

This week, let's give some thought to how welcoming we really are, from God's ideal perspective. Our website says that we welcome “all of God's children, regardless of identity, too participate fully in the life of our faith community.” Do our actions and behavior really reflect that welcome statement? When someone joins us for worship, is it worship that will engage them from a different perspective than our own? Do we step out of our own perspective and engage and accept those different from us from their perspective and point of view, to truly connect with them on a meaningful level? And how do we reflect God's love and compassion in addressing their needs and concerns, in a visible, demonstrative way? Let us all work together to find better ways of being the welcoming community we are called to, finding real ways to engage those who come through our doors, those who sit in the back, the narthex, and the balcony, but are still largely separate, or who come once never to return. May we seek new ways of doing and being that truly makes us one community of welcome in Christ. Amen.

Call to Serve

We know the reward of God’s welcome. The Holy Spirit has blown through us so that we sing of God’s steadfast love continually. Now, gathered here as prophets of welcome, we respond to what God has done. We give our gifts of tithes and offerings in the certain hope that God’s welcome will continue in the ministry we offer.

As we continue to seek to be a source of light and love in times such as these, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry and peace in these difficult days. As we listen to the following familiar hymn performed by Mutual Kumquat, let's give some thought as to how we might truly welcome others we encounter in the weeks ahead.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [video] ***Will You Let Me Be Your Servant***

The Servant Song - performed by Mutual Kumquat
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANZ3K6JxkwY>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Welcoming One, bless these gifts with your Spirit Transform these gifts into the balm that your world needs. In these gifts, may we welcome in a new world of love. Amen.

Benediction/Blessing/Assurance

God's love is a wellspring that gushes into eternal life. God's love cannot be held back, it overflows again and again. God's love is for you. You are God's child. Take heart; your sins are forgiven. Now go, and live into this good news, knowing that God's love is overflowing in you, pouring out to others. Love one another, and live, for the abundance of God's love, grace, and forgiveness has no end. Amen.

Postlude *The Family Prayer Song*, By Morris Chapman

Arranged by Carol Tornquist,
performed by church musician Annie Center,
used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246
<https://youtu.be/OkBRygZcV5U>