

Sunday, May 10, 2020

Use the Zoom link available on our website OR use your phone.

Call 1-646-558-8656

Meeting ID: 832 8148 8303 #

Join us any time after 9:45 a.m. The service will begin at 10:00 a.m.

MOTHERING GOD

Welcome to the St. Paul's United Church of Christ Mother's Day service. Today's liturgy uses three common stages of motherhood—infancy, parenting, and loss/hope—as windows through which we will gaze at the divine, to celebrate and contemplate the God who knit us together in our mother's womb, like a Grandmother crocheting the tapestry of our lives, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, the God who is Mother and Father to us all. Once again, welcome!

Stage 1 - Infancy

The love of the Triune God creates us, and binds and loosens us together. The energy it takes to push a wholly separate creation out of the mother's body is immense. The cord that unites mother to child is a cord that both releases the one from other, and at the same time unites the one with the other. The moment of breaking the cord, of separation, is essential for life, but is also painful. The essence and the pain of that moment of birth are at the heart of creation, at the heart of the Trinity.

HEARTS HAIKU

Hearts beat together —
Miracle umbilical
Springs life between us.

"Blest Be the Tie that Binds" - Bill Gaither

*Blest be the tie that binds, our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds, is like to that above.*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Most holy and merciful God,
we acknowledge and confess before you our sinful nature,
prone to evil and slow to do good;
and all our shortcomings and offenses.
No sooner have you knit us together,
then we unravel ourselves,
in wandering from your ways, in wasting your gifts, in forgetting your love.
But, O Lord, have mercy on us,
who are ashamed and sorry for all wherein we have displeased you.
Teach us to hate our errors;

cleanse us from our secret faults;
and forgive our sins;
for the sake of you dear Son.
And, O most holy and loving God,
help us to live in your light and walk in your ways,
according to the commandments of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD's MOTHERING LOVE - Isaiah 49:15; 66:13

Can a woman forget her nursing child,
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?
As a mother comforts her child,
so will I comfort you, says the Lord.

MAIL YOUR OFFERING - Please prayerfully consider what you may offer to God and send it to St. Paul's in the mail. Followed by a prayer of dedication and the "Doxology".

Stage 2 - Parenting

Two daughters squabble and squawk for their mother's love and attention; this happens everyday in the Schmidt household. As if there is a finite nature to their mother's love—which there isn't—the daughters compete for attention, for lap-time, for playtime, all of which are finite only when not shared.

This next poem was written by Ruth Harvey at a time of intense peace talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The agony and exile of many millions of people sitting alongside the passion on all sides to lay claim to a land, a story, which ultimately unites rather than divides, struck me as universally poignant. All creation is crafted from the universal love that is God-creation, God Mother-Father. In our world religions we play out, in horrific violence, our claim to Truth at the expense of all others. This bold claim is one re-enacted on every parent's lap, to which more than one child can lay an inalienable claim. Are there lessons for us to learn here?

DISPUTED TERRITORY

Two peoples, two histories:
One land, one story, bearing
The battle scars of the struggle.
Enemies, yet friends sitting
Side by side - both staking
Their equal and inalienable right
To the soil.

Two little girls, two histories:
One lap, one mother's body -

Space each wants to occupy
wholly;
To which each has her equal
And inalienable right.

No road map here will resolve
The unresolvable.
Only a heartfelt resolution
To love;
And to learn again,
As a child,
To share.

“Battle Hymn of the Republic” - Judy Collins

Originally written in 1861 by Julia Ward Howe, an abolitionist and advocate for women’s suffrage. In 1870, her “Appeal to womanhood throughout the world” later became known as “Mother’s Day Proclamation”, an ode to pacifism pled for in reaction to the carnage of war in America and in Europe, called for mothers of all nationalities to band together to promote the “amicable settlement of international questions.”

SHARING JOYS & CONCERNS

*Please state your name, share your announcement and then say over.
Followed by prayer.*

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.

Stage 3 - Loss & Hope

POEM - CHILD OF MINE

Ruth Harvey writes, our oldest child set off, at the age of 9, on her first school overnight trip. The parting, the missing and the returning spoke to me to the ebb and flow of God’s relationship with each one of us, a child of God, and of the ultimate glory of meeting God face-to-face.

Child of mine
you set off, bag in hand,
for your first post-womb solo journey.

(For you have been here before,

venturing into the unknown,
pushed, shoved, loved
beyond the womb
to an as-yet-unseen new life
where arms beckon and
hearts ache
to love you.)

Today, I release you,
I let you go.
You are mine, and yet
you are wholly your own.

Child of mine,
I miss you.
Yet in the missing
I love you
more roundly,
more deeply,
more strongly
than I could imagine.

Child of mine,
your return is as sweet
as the first sign of spring,
as the brush of a lip;
you journey across the playground,
bags now spilling from your shoulders,
spills love from my heart,
as I laugh and run to gather you up.

And in that moment,
child of mine,
I catch a glimpse of heaven,
where God will catch up
each child of Hers
and she will laugh with love
on our return.

LOST IN TRUST: A Prayer of Lament

Let us pray.

For many of us, O Lord, Mother's Day stirs within us a cauldron of loss.
Long ago we lost our Mother's who we loved, or couldn't bear to love,
who we knew, or never really knew.

For some of us, we're mothers who have lost our beloved children,
they've run away, they've grown away, they've passed away.
For the beloved we've lost, we lament.
Our hearts are wounded by this loss, and we will be shaped by this forever,
but we don't grieve without trust and hope in your steadfast love.

O Lord, we trust our beloved have never been lost to you.
You, the God who seeks like a shepherd finds lost sheep.
You, the God who finds and celebrates with the angels.
You, the God who holds fast and shelters and protects.
You, the God who is Emmanuel, with us, with them, with all.
We miss our dearly beloved, but we trust in your steadfast love,
You are promise keeper, light in the darkness.
You are here, you are the way maker. Amen.

"Way Maker" - Caleb and Kelsey

SCRIPTURE - Psalm 139

SERMON - Rev. Matt Schmidt

CLOSING WORDS

The cross...we shall take it.
The bread...we shall break it.
The pain...we shall bear it.
The joy...we shall share it.
The Gospel...we shall live it.
The love...we shall give it.
The light...we shall cherish it.
The darkness...God shall perish it.

BENEDICTION

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you : wherever he may send you;
May he guide you through the wilderness : protect you through the storm;
May he bring you home rejoicing : at the wonders he has shown you;
May he bring you home rejoicing : once again into our doors.