

“Home Church Worship” for Sunday June 28, 2020
4th Sunday after Pentecost
Written and prepared by Pastor Joanna Miller

Gathering:

We worship as we live – in the name of the Father, and the + Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Conversation with Kids:

Do any of you have a welcome mat at your front door? What is the purpose of the welcome mat, do you think? I say there are two things it does – first, it reminds people to wipe off their shoes before they come in (that’s important!) The other thing it does is tell people that they are welcome in your home.

What does the world welcome mean? Well, it’s a greeting, it tells someone you’re happy to see them. And it also means you’re happy to receive their presence. Welcome is something that is important to Jesus. He tells the disciples that whoever welcomes another, welcomes Jesus! Jesus reminds us that God often visits us in the hearts and faces of people... so polish off your welcome mat for when you can start having more people over again, because when they arrive, you get to welcome not only your friend, but Jesus too.

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If you would like to watch a video of Pastor Joanna reading the scripture and preaching her homily for this week, click [here](#).

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Scripture:

Matthew 10:40-42

[Jesus said to the twelve:] ⁴⁰“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

A cold glass of water...

Part of the training to become a pastor in the ELCIC includes completing a unit of clinical pastoral education, better known as CPE. What this means, is that we spend a few months providing spiritual care in a clinical setting – most commonly this happens in a hospital setting. It was about a dozen years ago now, at this time of year actually, that I completed my CPE unit. It would be a fair statement to say that on my first day, I was terrified. In my mind, people arrived at the hospital with real problems, (dealing with crises!) and the last thing they needed was me bumbling into their room and saying something stupid and unhelpful.

CPE was (as it's intended to be) a pretty life-changing experience. There are so many moments that I remember vividly, as if they happened yesterday. I owe my CPE survival, in great part, to my clinical supervisor – Sister Colleen Lashmar, SSJ. Sister Colleen oozed wisdom – she was the embodiment of compassion, but with strength... and humour. I loved her. It is not a stretch to say that I still quote Colleen all the time or that the ways I provide pastoral care, especially in times of crisis, still today are shaped by Colleen's teachings.

As my group began my CPE that year, Colleen taught us about what it meant to provide spiritual care. "If there's nothing else you can do for someone," she said "see if they need a drink of water.... Because when you care for someone's physical body, you care for their spirit as well." I basked in the simplicity of that statement even as I appreciated it's depth. I mean, offering water, that I could do! I still make a habit of checking to see if someone needs water when I walk into a hospital room. And, I still think of Colleen every time I do.

Perhaps it's no surprise then, that when I hear this text "and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward,"¹ I think of Sister Colleen and CPE. Offering water to someone who is parched, is indeed a holy thing.

These three verses come at the end of the section we've read over the last couple of weeks. 'The missionary discourse' in Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus sends out the disciples to "cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons"² This is followed by a whole slew of instructions, some of them warnings, some of them assurances. Jesus tells them that if someone doesn't welcome them, to shake the dust from their feet and continue; he tells them that he's sending them out as sheep among wolves. He tells them that nothing that is covered up won't be uncovered. And then Jesus offers this, a final thought – whoever welcomes you, welcomes me.

Seems to me that this can be understood in two ways, depending on how you read it. First you can hear it as the person doing the welcoming, in which case it becomes a bit of a warning. When you welcome someone, you welcome Jesus... but if you fail to offer welcome, you could very well be turning Jesus himself away. It's a cautionary tale. This way of looking at it is often used during conversations around immigration – and even church welcome statements.

¹ Matt 10:42

² Matt 10:8

And, while it feels a bit legalistic, it's worth taking note. If we believe, as we say we believe, that we see Jesus in the face of our neighbours – then I think we should absolutely be making great efforts to ensure our neighbours feel welcomed and loved.

The other way of hearing this is to focus on that 'you' in the first line. Whoever welcomes 'you', welcomes me. Jesus speaks it to the ones he sends out – with a promise. Some will in fact welcome you! And when they welcome you, you carry my presence with you. Not only will I be with you, but *you* will become a manifestation of my presence for those who open their doors.

It seems to be an apt time for us to hear this message. Because it's a reminder that in order to share the gospel, the good news, and even an 'in the flesh' experience of the Divine – we need to go out. Out of the church – and out we certainly are! It is quite possibly one of the biggest hidden blessings of these covid-19 times, to be reminded that we do not need a building to be The Church. [And while our building remains closed, The Church has never been closed.] This means that wherever we go, for whomever we meet, we have the chance to share the very presence of God with that person.

If we really believe this, then every time we leave our homes (no matter how infrequently that might be these days), is an opportunity. Each time we meet someone, even masked, is an opportunity to offer God's presence to another. It's a chance to offer grace and welcome and good news.

Something as little as an offer of a cup of water, in these hot summer days, is God's presence seen and felt. Whether we are the person offering the drink or the one receiving it, God is there. Sister Colleen really did know what she was talking about...It seems so simple and yet it is so profoundly true. To care for a person in any way, is to care for their spirit. In caring for their spirit, God's presence is made known.

Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me. Jesus is with you, travelling beside you, in all your journeys. May your presence be, for many, the very presence of the God who loves them.

Amen.

Song:

[I want Jesus to walk with me](#)

Prayers:

God of companionship, encourage our relationships with our siblings in Christ. Bless our conversations. Shape our shared future and give us hearts eager to share your presence in the world.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of abundance, you make your creation thrive and grow to provide all that we need. Inspire us to care for our environment and to listen to where the earth is crying out.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of care, accompany all who are in deepest need. Comfort those who are sick, lonely, or abandoned. We pray especially for Adolf, Christie, Luke, Helen, Wally, Jan, Luke, Katelyn, and those we name before you... .. Renew the spirits of all who call upon you.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of community, we give thanks for all of our brothers and sisters, your children, each one. During this weekend, where pride festivities would normally happen, we ask for your care and love to be showered on all members of the LGBTQ+ community. May they experience your holy welcome through the love of neighbours.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, as we continue to walk day by day through this time of pandemic, we remember those who work tirelessly for our health and safety. We give thanks for those who work so that we have access to all of our daily needs. Watch over them and protect them from harm.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of love, you gather in your embrace all who have died. Keep us steadfast in our faith and renew our trust in your promises.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things, Lord, we entrust to your care, knowing that you hear all of our prayers.

And we pray in the way that Jesus taught us to pray, saying:

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing:

May God bless us and keep us,

May God's face shine on us and be gracious to us,

May God look upon us with favour, and give us peace.

Amen.