



Let us commit to loving our neighbors
and rise to the

100 Day Mask Challenge!

January 20, 2021 to April 29, 2021

**"This is my commandment: love each other
just as I have loved you." John 15:12 (CEB)**

3rd Sunday In Epiphany

January 24, 2021

510.522.6744 twintowers.office@gmail.com

www.twintowersumc.org

Twin Towers United Methodist Church

1411 Oak Street, Alameda, CA 94501

WORSHIP GUIDE

Before you begin your time of worship, find a comfortable place to be and gather whatever you might need: your Bible, your Advent candles, something to write on and with, your computer/connected device (if you intend to listen to music online), etc. Feel free to adapt this worship guide in any way that makes best sense to you and those you might be gathered with. (Consider inviting someone – a friend, a family member – to worship with you.) Commit to spending the next hour with God.

PRELUDE - Listen and sing along to a song or hymn that blesses and centers your spirit!

WELCOME - *Thank you Pastor Emily for giving the Community Health Team the opportunity to guide this service today. In planning for services, it's always good to have timely messages that will be relevant by the time the date of the service rolls around. Recently, predicting the future has been very difficult. Where will we be in another month or for that matter, a week from now? The upheavals in our economic, social, political and medical realities are traumatizing.*

The Community Health Team, under Pastor Don's insightful leadership, has been focused on one part of our rapidly changing world. Humankind's war on killer bacteria and viruses. At the moment, we are intently focused on Covid, but there have been other equally lethal viruses and bacteria some of which still persist without full resolution like AIDS, Ebola and Dengue fever. It's clear, if humans are to survive, we have to get smarter and evolve our threat identification, vaccine, and cure development strategies way beyond those that worked historically for other plagues. The mRNA strategy that is being used to develop the Covid vaccines today is an example of our evolving thinking. We are getting smarter. But, the current Covid vaccines are not a cure and it's not proven that they prevent transmission, They are ,however, designed to prevent most people from feeling the symptoms and getting really sick.

So what is the Community Health Team going to do? For that matter, what are we as individuals supposed to do? Are we powerless? What does any of this have to do with our faith as disciples-in-training? Our answer is the 100 day mask challenge. For at least the next 100 days, we are challenging ourselves and asking you to join us. Remember to wear a mask at all times in public. The 100 days corresponds to our New President's 100 day challenge. But why? Aside from protecting ourselves, why? Our service today, guided by the Gospels is meant to give us a moment of reflection and some insight to answering this question.

CENTERING HYMN – “We Are Called” TFWS 2172

Listen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgomtlc1_yc

1. Come! Live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
To live in the freedom of the city of God!

Refrain:

We are called to act with justice,
we are called to love tenderly,
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God!

2. Come! Open your heart!
Show your mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless
so all hatred and blindness will be no more!

3. Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of that great day
when all will be one!
God will reign,
and we'll walk with each other
as sisters and brothers united in love!

CENTERING PRAYER –

O God our Healer, show your compassion for the whole human family that is in turmoil and burdened with illness and with fear. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Come to our aid as the coronavirus spreads globally, heal those who are sick, support and protect their families and friends from being infected. **Lord, hear our prayer**

Heal our self-centeredness and indifference that makes us worry only when the virus threatens us, open ways beyond timidity and fear that too easily ignore our neighbor. **Lord hear our prayer**

Guide the leaders of the nations that they speak the truth, halt the spread of misinformation and act with justice so that all your family may know healing. **Lord, hear our prayer**

Hold in your gentle embrace all who have died and who will die this day. Comfort their loved ones in their despair. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

SCRIPTURE - John 15: 12, 16-17 & Galatians 5: 13-14 / NRSV

¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in

my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

This is the Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!**

MESSAGE - During Worship, we heard individual messages from members of the Community Health Team.

An original poem by Jen:

Just a Droplet...

“Cover your mouth

When you cough,”

Mom said.

“Protect one another

and don’t dare spread

the sickness that swirls

within your head.”

Just a droplet here...

or a droplet there

seems so innocent

as it floats through the air.

Landing in a place

upon another’s face

Insinuating its way

into any open space

As it blossoms

and grows

at a fever’s pace.

Coughing

Choking

Smothering

Killing.”

Just a droplet here

Or a droplet there.

People dying

everywhere.

© Jen Tellier, 2020 (written 8/9/20)

From Joanne:

Why did I choose to be on this team? First and foremost because of Pastor Don. He is an excellent teacher and I always learn something.

When I was 18 my Father was diagnosed with Tuberculosis. The Public Health Department was immediately at our home. They contact traced every person and place we had been in the last few months. Through their investigation they found out that the restaurant my Father stopped at for pie and coffee that the cook had Tuberculosis. They found that hundreds of people had been infected. I feel that contact tracing is very important

On January 15th Alex Azar the Secretary of Health and Human Services under the Trump Administration said that the reserve vaccine stockpile did not exist. It is imperative that we continue to wear our MASKS until we are all vaccinated.

We're all in this together.

WEAR YOUR MASK, WASH YOUR HANDS AND MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE.

From Patty:

In 2019, I watched a National Geographic mini-series about the Zaire Ebola virus. Ebola was first discovered in 1976 in African nations and the Philippines. It was not until 1989 that the U.S. began studying Ebola and experienced its first case in the U.S. in 2014. The thought of a disease like Ebola spreading in the U.S. was indeed frightening. To date, many countries in the world have suffered through Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that appeared in 2002 (U.S. 8 cases) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) that appeared in 2012 (U.S. 2 cases). Since 1918, the U.S. has been spared of a massive outbreak of a killer disease until now.

Adhering to the Stay in Place order, wearing a mask when out of my home, washing my hands, and staying apart from people wasn't that difficult at the beginning. However, when the pandemic did not abate, but seemed to escalate, in part because many people still refused to take precautions, such as wearing a mask, Pastor Don's encouragement to gather a group to read and learn about killer diseases was a means to understand/accept/work through our current predicament.

For the holidays, sadly my usual trips to Washington State and gathering with friends and family did not occur. Although I saw photos and joined FaceTime and phone conversations, it certainly was not the same holiday traditions and celebrations. Therefore, I wear a mask so I can be physically with my family and friends without extreme fear that I will be passing on the COVID-19 virus or will not be exposed to it. I pray daily that our God will grant us mercy.

From John:

I joined the Community Health Team because I wanted to do something positive for the community and society with respect to Covid-19. It made me wonder: "What can I do?" and "What can others do?" How can we influence people that Covid-19 is a real danger? I wanted to effectively encourage family, friends, neighbors and coworkers to take precautions. The best way I found to do this was by learning the facts around Covid-19 and to not lecture to others. Instead, I found sincerity and having a civil discussion has been helpful. But before

I can educate others, I needed to educate myself. Being on the team and reading the book has been a wonderful way to do this. I realize that in this country's climate, you cannot convince everyone. We can try to "do the most good for the most people."

From Donna:

I joined the Community Health Team because I wanted to learn from Pastor Don and the team.

Over the last year, frontline workers such as healthcare workers, police, firefighters, postal workers, grocery workers, farmworkers, teachers and custodians have been helping all of us during the pandemic. Many have lost their lives or experienced a great deal of stress and fear of infecting their families. People have lost jobs, homes and businesses because of Covid-19. I wanted to find a way to support them by helping to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

I've been upset by the news coverage on Channels 4, 5 and 7. The news over the last year has seemed dominated by interviews of people who say wearing a mask is "difficult", "uncomfortable" or "against their civil rights or individual freedom." I've seen stories of "Christians" who defy Public Health recommendations and have gathered without masks. It made it seem like our community and culture is dominated by selfishness or indifference - I don't believe this. I just think their voices have been louder. I've been hungry for voices that say "I wear a mask because if there is a chance it saves another person's life, then it's a good thing to do." I've hoped for stories of Christians who say they wear masks because of their faith and love for others.

Pastor Don's suggestion that we hold a 100 Day Mask Challenge as a congregation is an opportunity to demonstrate our faith and love for others. The frontline workers have sacrificed so much. I feel wearing a mask is a small thing compared to what they are enduring for us. My mother is 91. I'm doing this for her too.

From Fred:

A week ago, my neighbor told me that the whole Covid pandemic is a scam and she wasn't going to fall for it. Really. Others have said the government "can't tell me what to do, I have the right to wear a mask or not as I please." I also know, from watching TV, that there are still others who consider that not wearing a mask is a statement about their political beliefs and still others that feel their faith is all the protection from the virus that they need. All are anti-maskers.

Today we can assure ourselves that we don't have to deconstruct all of these truths, half-truths and myths to know whether or not we should be wearing a mask. If we love and truly care for

our neighbor, we will wear our masks out of love and concern. That's it. What does it mean to be a Christian and loving one another as He has loved us? The message is clear. If not for our own beliefs about science and contagion, then wear a mask out of respect for the strong beliefs of our brothers and sisters. "Love your neighbor as yourself" That's clear, it doesn't matter what you believe yourself. For example, at home, will you cook broccoli for your Mother because she loves it, even if you can't stand it? Of course you will. Will you sacrifice your own comforts to help send your granddaughter to Seminary? Of course you will, I love that one, or, are you sad when her goldfish dies you are. Of course, those actions and feelings and a thousand others are all part of being in a family. We are all part of a larger family, a loving family of Christians, led by our Savior, who sacrificed everything for us. Again, should we do something for our brother or sister they feel strongly about. Of course we should. Wearing a mask then becomes part of our Christian service and witness in the family.

Pastor Don believes that wearing a mask may be sacramental. That is, an action that strengthens and expresses faith. Similar to the use of holy water, making the sign of the cross, or taking Communion. Wearing a mask is not a burden but rather an invitation and expression of our Christian love. Praise the Lord!

HYMN OF RESPONSE - "Healer of Every Ill" TFWS 2213

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwBewCxunL0>

Refrain:

Healer of our every ill,
light of each tomorrow,
give us peace beyond our fear,
and hope beyond our sorrow.

You who know our fears and sadness,
grace us with your peace and gladness;
Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts.

2. In the pain and joy beholding
how your grace is still unfolding,
give us all your vision, God of love.
3. Give us strength to love each other,
every sister, every brother;
Spirit of all kindness, be our guide.
4. You who know each thought and feeling,
teach us all your way of healing;
Spirit of compassion, fill each heart.

CONSECRATING MASKS - *Our new President, Joe Biden, has invited all US citizens to wear a mask in public for the first 100 days of his presidential term. As citizens and Christians we can accept this invitation and make of our acceptance a sacramental act, that not only expresses our patriotism but also strengthens and expresses our Christian faith.*

I invite you to lift your mask to God to signify your acceptance of the invitation, and to pray:

As I wear a mask to defeat this pandemic

I remember Jesus.

As I wear a mask

I love my neighbors

Even as I love myself. Amen.

In the 100 days to come you may want to say those words to God and to yourself each time you put on your mask to remember Jesus and why you are wearing a mask.

CLOSING HYMN - "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love" TFWs 2223

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwKCvuorl9E&pbjreload=101>

We are one in the Spirit,
we are one in the Lord, (x2)
And we pray that all unity
may one day be restored.

Refrain:

And they'll know we are Christians
by our love, by our love;
Yes, they'll know we are Christians
by our love.

2. We will walk with each other,
We will walk hand in hand, (x2)
And together we'll spread the news

that God is in our land:

3. We will work with each other,
we will work side by side, (x2)
and we'll guard human dignity
and save human pride:

4. All praise to the Father,
from whom all things come,
and all praise to Christ Jesus,
God's only Son,
and all praise to the Spirit,
who makes us one:

BENEDICTION - Let the majesty of the Creator be the light by which you walk,
the compassion of the Son be the love by which you walk,
and the presence of the Spirit be the power by which you walk.

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!

NEXT WEEK'S SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:21-28