



Thanksgiving Sunday
November 22nd, 2020

Twin Towers United Methodist Church

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WORSHIP GUIDE

Before you begin your time of worship, find a comfortable place to be and gather whatever you might need: your Bible, some paper or a notebook, something to write 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 – *Welcome to this time of worship! On every other year, most of you would have woken up early today so that you could put the last touches on your delicious potluck dish before getting to the sanctuary just in time for worship. There would be an excitement in the air as we looked forward to the beginning of a whole week of celebrating...with each other, with extended family and loved ones, with friends. But this year is different, isn't it? This year, after 8 months we are still separated from one another, sheltering in place. We are alternatively anxious and hopeful as we wonder if we might ever get back to what was...or what will be. This year, so different from any other, and this Thanksgiving Sunday, this Thanksgiving week is different from any before, and so I invite you to pause (especially if you're carrying any of that heaviness, any of that grief) and take a deep breath, to welcome the love of God that is surely present and ever available to meet you, and to allow these familiar words to remind you that there is still beauty, there is still joy, there is still goodness and grace in the midst of this year that is unlike any other.*

OPENING HYMN - “For the Beauty of the Earth”, UMH 92, vs. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6

Listen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_4VvQTUsP0

1. For the beauty of the earth,
for the glory of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies;

Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

2. For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon, and stars of light;

refrain:

4. For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild;

6. For thyself, best Gift Divine,
to the world so freely given,
for that great, great love of thine,
peace on earth, and joy in heaven:

5. For thy church, that evermore
lifteth holy hands above,
offering upon every shore
her pure sacrifice of love;

OPENING PRAYER – *You are invited to take a deep breath as you pray:*

Lord of all,
all beauty and all despair,
all glory and all struggle,
all joy and all that is tender in our hearts:

We know that there is always something to be grateful for,
be it our breath,
our awaking to see a new day,
or any other taken-for-granted grace that you gift to us.
Give us clear eyes this morning to see,
and open, unclenched hands to receive.

We come, Loving God, to raise a hymn of grateful praise.
We want it to be full-throated and full-hearted,
sung from our guts,
and felt in our bones.
We want it to look full on at our disappointments and anxieties,
and still find a way to rise up.
We want it to fill our mouths with the sweetness of your presence,
and to free us to be your people,
courageous,
ready,
hopeful,
come what may.

And so we gather this morning.

We come because you indeed are the best gift, Gift Divine.
May this time of worship renew and refresh us,
and bless you.

We pray this in the name of the one who walks with us and shows us the way, Jesus our
Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURE - Psalm 98 / NRSV

¹ O sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvelous things.

His right hand and his holy arm
have gotten him victory.

² The Lord has made known his victory;
he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

³ He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.

⁴ Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

⁵ Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

⁷ Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.

⁸ Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy

⁹ at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming
to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

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

LISTEN -

It is becoming a tradition at Twin Towers to mark Thanksgiving Sunday by inviting community members to share a word of testimony and faith, to lift up their hymn of grateful praise, their new song of gratitude that was composed over the last year. This tradition is important not only because our stories of God's presence and love in our lives are important and grounding to us, but because they help to remind us all that God is real, active, and at work in our lives, worthy to be trusted, worthy for us to surrender to. Hearing one another's stories reminds us to look around and recognize God's grace in our own lives - something that we can lose sight of, and brings our vision back to God, as source and giver, as healer and our all in all. Any time is a good time to share our stories of gratitude, but especially today.

This year, I invited Lillian Taddei, Steve Taddei, and Brian Stewart to share their witness. I am thankful to each of them for saying yes grateful for what they shared.

I invite us all to spend some time though this Thanksgiving week to consider:

1. What is the "new song" of gratitude you are singing this year? How is it different from other years and times? How is your song inspired by God's steadfast love and faithfulness to you through this challenging year?
2. What might you "do" with your gratitude? Over the last 6 weeks, we have been grappling with being not only "gifted" people, but people "entrusted" with gifts. Put another way, how will you concretely "pay your gratitude forward"?

After spending some time reflecting on these questions, I strongly encourage you to connect with someone and share what came up! I am certain this will be a blessing to another, be meaningful to you, and knit us together in God's grace.

I began our worship series some 6 weeks ago by talking about the spiritual orientation that affirms all we are and all we have as gifts from God. That's the root of stewardship, I think. Stewardship that is not just about our money and resources, not just about our time, talent, and service, but about the whole of us, the whole of our lives. At the end of the day, I sense the key stewardship question to be how are we - every part of us - available to God?

Over the course of the 6 weeks, we lifted up different gifts, some that we share in common and some that are uniquely ours. We lifted up the gift of creation and the common good, the gift of stories and legacies, of purpose, and of direction and resources. It is my prayer that each week was a sweet and tender reminder of what a good and generous God we have, a God of such abundance, extravagance, and love. It is also my prayer that each week was an urgent and provocative call that invited listening, reflection, and obedience about how each of us individually and all of us together will use these gifts (all our gifts) for God's purposes, God's dreams, God's movement in the world. Gifted and entrusted...that's who we are. And we can't be that without being grateful. And we can't be that without being generous. Gifted and entrusted is the flip side of being grateful and generous. So, Friends, as we enter into a new year (for next Sunday brings the beginning of a new liturgical year), let us commit to growing in gratitude and deepening in generosity, not just as stale spiritual disciplines, but as life-giving, life-transforming ways that we come to experience God in our lives and share that wonder and hope with others. Let us rise up, a mighty and joyful collective, singing our songs of grateful praise!

HYMN of MEDITATION - "Thank You, Lord" *We give great thanks to the gift of the Tigas family. May this be our song and our prayer.

Watch and listen here: <https://youtu.be/01c6PCtInPs>

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE – *Spend time in prayer. What did you hear for yourself through today's scripture and reflection? Talk to God about it. Then lift up the joys and concerns that are in your heart. You might write them down, speak them aloud, or pray them in silence.*

I would be honored to pray with you and for you.

Please send a note via text, mail, or email or give me a call if I can do so.

SHARING OUR GIFTS– *How might you offer yourself and all that you have to God this week? How are you being invited to practice generosity? Spend a moment listening for God's direction.*

You are invited to contribute financially towards the purpose and ministry of TTUMC. We are a congregation committed to being conduits of God's healing in our neighborhood and beyond, and in so doing, impact the last and the least. You can contribute by mailing in a check, dropping off cash, or giving online via PayPal (visit www.twintowersumc.org). Take a moment and do that now. Please also be sure to return your Stewardship Response Card via mail or online [here today!](#)

CLOSING HYMN - "Give Thanks, My Soul, For Harvest",

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wg2jhwm5RNo>

Give thanks, my soul, for harvest, for store of fruit and grain;
but know the owner gives so that we may share again.

Where people suffer hunger, or little children cry,
With gifts from God's rich bounty may thankfulness reply

Give thanks, my soul for riches of woodland, mine and hill,
But know that gold and timber are the Creator's still.
God lends to us, as stewards, abundance we might share,
And thus provide earth's children, the blessing of God's care.

Give thanks, my soul, for labours that strength and days employ,
But know the Maker's purpose brings toil as well as joy.
Show forth, O God, your purpose, direct our will and hand
To share your love and bounty with all in every land.

BENEDICTION -

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May He make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May the eyes of your heart be open to all the blessings which surround you; may this awareness produce a harvest of generosity in your spirit.

May thankfulness rise up within you, not just during this short season, but day after day, from the early morning watch until you retire for the night.

May your prayers reflect gratitude, while also acknowledging the needs of others whose situations are so drastically different.

May thoughts of Jesus fill your mind, and thanksgiving be your response.

~<http://dialogizomai.blogspot.com/>

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!



If you are on Facebook, please like and follow our page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ttumcAlameda/>

SCRIPTURE for Nov. 29th, 2020 (First Sunday in Advent): **Mark 13:24-37** and **Isaiah 64:1-9**

PRAYER INVITES:

- Those amongst us who are overwhelmed and struggling with loneliness and isolation.
- The children and families who are unengaged and in despair because of this challenging school year.