



**May 17th, 2020**  
***Sixth Sunday of Easter***

***Twin Towers United Methodist Church***  
**1411 Oak Street, Alameda, CA 94501**

\*Adapted from “Heart of the Matter” Worship Resource, © Marcia McFee

## **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** - “This is My Father’s World”, UMH 144

*Listen here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEBmj7JO\\_Os](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEBmj7JO_Os)*

**WELCOME** – Today marks the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter. We gather with the conviction that Easter isn’t just a day, but a practice for every day. This week we are called to keep Jesus’ commandments – to love one another. We do so by keeping each other in our hearts.

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

Holy Living God,  
Heartbeat of Creation,  
help me to take this time to center on you,  
for you made me,  
you gave me life,  
and you continue to be with me  
every moment...  
every breath...  
every step. Amen.

*Hear this assurance from God:*

Be still, O heart, you’re not alone,  
your beat is shared with me.  
Come now, and calm, and center here,  
you’re mine, secure and free.

You are invited to take another deep breath, making sure your shoulders and any tension you feel in your body is blown out, let of with each breath. Take another.

If you have been using a heart stone (worry stone, or courage stone), pick it up now and let your touch on its surface remind you that God's touch is within you and around you. As close and real as the stone is in your hand right now, that's how close Love is to you always.

Take a moment to imagine letting go of your worries for now into God's heart of love. Pray:  
Into your care, O God, I offer now,  
my worries, fears and strife.  
I turn to you and know you're near—  
Your light, my love and life.

**CENTERING HYMN** - "Sweet, Sweet Spirit", UMH 334

Listen here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLOWWrm\\_Yjc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLOWWrm_Yjc)

*There's a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place,  
and I know it's the Spirit of the Lord;  
there are sweet expressions on each face,  
and I know they feel the presence of the Lord.*

*Sweet Holy Spirit, sweet heavenly Dove,  
stay right here with us, filling us with your love;  
and for these blessings we lift our hearts in praise;  
without a doubt we'll know that we have been revived  
when we shall leave this place.*

**SCRIPTURE** - **John 14:15-21** (The Voice)

*Our scripture reading comes from the Gospel according to John, chapter 14, verses 14 – 21. You are invited to open up your own Bibles and follow along. This passage comes from Jesus' final words to his disciples, a section known as the "farewell discourse". In this section, we hear Jesus twine together our love for him with our obedience to his commands, and the assurance that we will be companioned and helped in our endeavor to do so.*

<sup>15</sup> If you love Me, obey the commandments I have given you. <sup>16</sup> I will ask the Father to send you another Helper, the Spirit of truth, who will remain constantly with you. <sup>17</sup> The world does not recognize the Spirit of truth, because it does not know the Spirit and is unable to receive Him. But you do know the Spirit because He lives with you, and He will dwell in you. <sup>18</sup> I will never abandon you like orphans; I will return to be with you. <sup>19</sup> In a little while,

the world will not see Me; but I will not vanish completely from your sight. Because I live, you will also live. <sup>20</sup> At that time, you will know that I am in the Father, you are in Me, and I am in you. <sup>21</sup> The one who loves Me will do the things I have commanded. My Father loves everyone who loves Me; and I will love you and reveal My heart, will, and nature to you.

## **REFLECT -**

- Have you felt alone or lonely in the last stretch? How did it impact your spirit and faith?
- How have you experienced God's presence and constant companionship in your life?

I imagine every single one of us has – at some point over the last 9 weeks – felt alone and deeply lonely. How could it be otherwise? For those of us who live alone, this might be especially true. Joanne told me last Sunday when I stopped by with an Upper Room and a mask, that she had started reading aloud to herself once in awhile just to hear a voice in the house! Patty mentioned how good it was to stop by our parsonage with our handyman on Tuesday...seeing and talking with another human being in the flesh (rather than through a screen) was a treat, even if all you were talking about was maintenance issues! But feeling alone or lonely isn't true only of those living alone. A parent recently shared with me how much she missed her husband through this whole sheltering in place even though they were living in the same house. Why? Because every day was now regimented into shifts, switching off between work, homeschooling, cooking, cleaning, etc. The couple were like ships passing in the night! There was no longer any time to connect and be with each other. But while loneliness might very much be on the rise during this time of sheltering in place, the Red Cross had noted that it was a “silent and hidden epidemic” more than 2 years ago, one that had serious health impacts associated with it. Folks who experience persistent loneliness tend to be at risk of things like coronary heart diseases and strokes, high blood pressure, cognitive decline and dementia, and also depression. If loneliness impacts our bodies and emotions in such stark ways, surely, it impacts our spiritual lives and our faith also.

In our scripture reading today, Jesus – talking to his disciples near the end of his life, sensing their anxiety and fears, I imagine – made an extraordinary promise: to send a Helper, an Advocate, who would remain constantly with them...who would, in the words of The Voice Bible, “live with them and dwell in them”. Jesus, in fact, uses a very strong image to convey his promise: “I will never abandon you like orphans,” he says in verse 18. Is there any one more alone in the world than a child who has lost his or her parents and family? Is there any one who might feel more disconnected, more bereft of relationship, more untethered from love and care? Jesus assures his disciples: that will never be you! No chance, no how! I am

coming to you...as Spirit, so that I might be in you and you in me. In other words, ascension will make a new relationship with Jesus possible for those first disciples...and for us.

And that relationship – that constant companionship, that intimate partnering – means we can and do have whatever we need to follow Jesus with utter obedience and bold courage, with extravagance and confidence. We will never be going it alone. We will never have to rely only on ourselves and our limited limitations. We will never have to depend on our own strength, our own wisdom, our own will. We will never have to empty out our own well of love or compassion. At all times and in all places, we are not alone! In fact, we are accompanied by the most extraordinary presence of all – that of the resurrected Jesus, the Holy Spirit!

Friends, when I first came to Twin Towers UMC almost 2 years ago, I undertook a “get to know you” process. I invited everyone to sign up to share a cup of coffee, take a walk together, or just meet up at the office with me so that we might get to know each other a bit. One of the questions that I asked each person was to share a little about their journey of faith. I still remember the extraordinary stories I was told – not just by one person, but time and again – of how you came to know the indisputable reality of God’s presence in your life. You told me of how a hand – as real as yours and mine - took your hand in the midst of hardship, of praying on your knees and suddenly knowing in your bones that another had joined you, of words coming out of your mouth that were not yours that brought hope and reconciliation, of a miraculous peace that flooded your being, of weighty burdens literally taken off your shoulders. These stories – your stories - bear witness to Jesus’ promise. We are not alone, not now, not ever!

My prayer this morning is that you will take hold of that promise today. If you are struggling with feeling alone, with loneliness; If you need a hand to grab as you walk each day; If you are seeking to be more grounded in God’s presence and haven’t quite figured out how to do so; If you want to renew your love for Jesus and for others, to follow his commands...please let me know in some way. I want to come alongside you intentionally.

“I will not leave you orphaned...I will ask the Father to send you another Helper who will be with you forever.” May we float in God’s grace and care...and be anchored in the Spirit’s abiding presence. Amen.

**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.*

Joys –Where are you witnessing resurrection...in yourself and in the world?

Concerns – Where are you yearning for resurrection...in yourself and in the world?

*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.*

*When you are ready, pray the words that Jesus taught his disciples beginning, “Our Father...”*

**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](http://www.twintowersumc.org)). Take a moment and do that now.*

**CLOSING HYMN - “We Are the Church” UMH 558**

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Weugc4TPwrM>

I am the church!

You are the church!

We are the church together!

All who follow Jesus, all around the world!

Yes, we’re the church together!

The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple,  
the church is not a resting place, the church is a people.

Sometimes the church is marching, sometimes it's bravely burning,  
sometimes it's riding, sometimes hiding, always it’s learning.

And when the people gather, there's singing and there's praying,  
there's laughing and there's crying sometimes, all of it saying:

**CLOSING AFFIRMATION -**

We know Jesus is present among us  
even in this very home  
We will not let fear be louder than love  
but with glad hearts and rejoicing souls  
we will sing God's praise  
for we are Easter People!

**BENEDICTION -** *(based on Psalm 16)*

As we close this time together, remember:  
God is always with you. No matter what you face,  
no matter what trials or hardships come your way,  
God is right beside you, always filling your cup to overflowing,  
guiding and directing your path.  
So, acknowledge your fear and your worry  
and know it is as true and holy as any feeling,  
including joy, hope, courage and love.  
Take heart! Knowing that as your heart overflows,  
you are connected to the heart of the matter. **Amen.**

**NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!**

You are invited to spend the next stretch on the phone. Pick up our directory and consider calling someone you don't yet know well or someone who might not know others. It doesn't need to be complicated. Perhaps something as simple as, "Hi! I'm calling to say 'hello'. How have you been?"



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