



July 12th, 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 your spirit!

WELCOME – I wonder if any of the following statements resonates with you:

- Despite going to church for years, I can't say I really know or understand the Bible.
- Where do I start with the Bible? With Genesis?
- Reading the Bible by myself is so hard! I feel like I only “get it” by listening to others.
- It feels like you have to go to seminary to understand the Bible.
- The Bible is so confusing...and dense...and random...and confusing!
- There are some parts of the Bible that are disturbing! What do we do with those?
- I pretty much know only the parts of the Bible that we talk about at church.
- I really want to get to know the Bible better...but just have no idea how.

If any of these feel familiar to you, please know that you aren't alone in your confusion or dismay. These are common statements I hear as a pastor. Yet what do we do with our confusion and dismay especially as we consider the Bible central to our faith and to our discipleship? It is my prayer that together we might grab hold of the possibility that the Bible is accessible to every one of us, rich with meaning and blessing for our lives, and wholly transformative. Through this time of worship, I hope to invite us into a conversation that might encourage and inspire each of us, and ultimately call us to take a “next step” in engaging and befriending the Bible.

OPENING HYMN - “As the Deer” TFWS 2025

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRrKnxMfaC4>

*As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you.*

*You alone are my heart's desire,
and I long to worship you.
You alone are my strength, my shield;
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire,
and I long to worship you.*

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

We gather together in Your presence with expectation,
hungry for an encounter with You,
eager to hear Your life-giving Word.

Open our eyes and ears to the presence of Your Holy Spirit,
moving in and amongst us, here and now.
May the seeds of Your Word scattered among us this morning
fall on fertile soil.
May they take root in our hearts and lives,
and produce an abundant harvest
of healing words and just deeds
as well as just words and healing deeds.
We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ,
our teacher and the Word enfleshed. Amen.

SCRIPTURE - **Isaiah 55:1-13** (CEV)

Prophets came onto the scene, called and commissioned by God, to awaken God's people, to get their attention, and to turn them away from whatever path of death and destruction they were on...towards life, God's full and abundant life. Isaiah's words this morning are exactly that, calling God's people to God and to life. As we hear Isaiah's words, I invite you to consider: where does that call resonate for you in your life?

¹ If you are thirsty,
come and drink water!
If you don't have any money,
come, eat what you want!
Drink wine and milk
without paying a cent.

² Why waste your money

on what really isn't food?
Why work hard for something
that doesn't satisfy?
Listen carefully to me,
and you will enjoy
the very best foods.

³ Pay close attention!

Come to me and live.
I will promise you
the eternal love and loyalty
that I promised David.
⁴ I made him the leader and ruler
of the nations;
he was my witness to them.
⁵ You will call out to nations
you have never known.
And they have never known you,
but they will come running
because I am the Lord,
the holy God of Israel,
and I have honored you.
⁶ Turn to the Lord!
He can still be found.
Call out to God! He is near.
⁷ Give up your crooked ways
and your evil thoughts.
Return to the Lord our God.
He will be merciful
and forgive your sins.
⁸ The Lord says:
“My thoughts and my ways
are not like yours.

⁹ Just as the heavens
are higher than the earth,
my thoughts and my ways
are higher than yours.
¹⁰ “Rain and snow fall from the sky.
But they don’t return
without watering the earth
that produces seeds to plant
and grain to eat.
¹¹ That’s how it is with my words.
They don’t return to me
without doing everything
I send them to do.”
¹² When you are set free,
you will celebrate
and travel home in peace.
Mountains and hills will sing
as you pass by,
and trees will clap.
¹³ Cypress and myrtle trees
will grow in fields
once covered by thorns.
And then those trees will stand
as a lasting witness
to the glory of the Lord.

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

LISTEN- As I was reading through the lectionary texts for today - 4 different scripture texts arranged in a 3 year cycle - I found myself drawn to Isaiah’s seemingly urgent call to God’s people: Come! Buy! Eat! Drink! Listen! See! Delight! Turn! Isaiah’s words nudged at my inner thirst to be connected to God, my desire for true nourishment, and my longing to not just live - to pass my days, one after the other - but to live. I wonder if they did the same for you. And as I then read and reread, read and reread this passage, I found myself thinking about “true food”. Isaiah asks the people, “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, why waste your money on what really isn’t food, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?” Good questions, don’t you think? These questions seem as relevant and appropriate today in our context as they must have been in his. I’m certain we can all relate, at some level, to the

possibility that we spend our resources on that which brings no real nourishment to our lives, and our efforts, our labor on that which results in no joy or fulfillment. I'm certain too that we all, at least once in a while, eat things that do nothing for our bodies, that contain no real nutrition, that might not even be rightfully labeled "food". We have whole aisles at the grocery store, after all, filled with "junk" food. But Isaiah's questions aren't asking us about our love affair with twinkies and doritos, but instead prompting us to consider how we're nourishing our spirit, how we're feeding our souls. In this, Isaiah is inviting us not only to eat what is good, but to delight ourselves in rich foods, the very best foods. Friends, do you know what nourishes your spirit and fuels your soul? Asking that question got me thinking about scripture - scripture as good food, true food, rich food, and wondering, "are we all eating well?" [*Here, the gathered congregation broke into small groups and utilized the following questions for reflection. You are encouraged to spend some time with these questions.*]

- What is a scripture passage or story that has significantly impacted you? How did it do so?
- How have you been able to grow and strengthen in your understanding of or engagement with scripture? (What practices or resources have made a difference to you?)
- What - if anything - is your hope for your relationship with scripture? What might your "next step" be?

[*As the congregation returned to the large group, shared highlights, all were invited to connect if feel nudged to act on any of the following "next steps". You are invited to do the same.*]

Please connect...

- If you're interested in getting involved in a Bible study
- If you're interested in leading/facilitating a Bible study
- If you'd like to receive a regular devotion that enables you to engage with scripture
- Would like some overview material
- Would like suggestions for a book to read (from the Bible or about the Bible)

The Gospel lectionary text today tells the Parable of the Sower...do you remember that one? Jesus tells his listeners about a farmer who goes out to sow and he scatters his seed *everywhere*. It's a story that often invites us to consider how we receive the word of God. After all, Jesus, in explaining the parable to his disciples calls the seed, "the word of the kingdom." But today, I want to call our attention not to the fact that the sower sows his seed not just in good soil, but everywhere, nor about the different ways that seed is received, but to what happens when the seed is able to flourish. Jesus, explaining the parable, says to his disciples, "But as for what was

sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundred fold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” Jesus here gives us a picture of what happens when God’s word takes root in us - we bear fruit, abundant fruit, fruit that feeds and delights our neighbors and makes real the world of love, justice, and joy that we all long for. So Friends, what’s your next step in eating well?

SONG OF MEDITATION - “Wonderful Words of Life”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8ISYNpNYow>

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 God at work in yourself and in the world?

Concerns – Where are you yearning for God to be at work in yourself and 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.

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.

CLOSING HYMN - “Thy Word is a Lamp” UMH 601

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVO-WAi-hGg>

Refrain:

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.

1. When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way,
still you're there right beside me,
and nothing will I fear
as long as you are near.
Please be near me to the end.
2. Now I will not forget
your love for me and yet
my heart forever is wandering,
Jesus, be my guide
and hold me to your side,
and I will love you to the end.

BENEDICTION - *May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-19)*

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!

You are invited to spend the next stretch reaching out. 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?"



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

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

Scripture for Sunday, July 19th - **Matthew 9:20-22**

This week, please pray for:

- Our longing to grow in God's word.
- The unfolding conversation happening through "Love Thy Neighbor: Partnering for Racial Justice" Workshops - that the Holy Spirit would work in each of our hearts, bring people together, and enable a powerful, transformative conversation to unfold. (July 5, 12, 19 @ 2:00 p.m.)
- Healing and strength for Verne, P. Don, P. Bob, Alan, Jim M.