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**July 25th, 2021**

**Miracles VIII / The Presence that Transforms Us**

***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, 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** – ([www.ministrymatters.com](http://www.ministrymatters.com))

Though darkness seems to envelop us.

**Jesus breaks through with a word of peace.**

Fears are banished!

**Hope is more than restored**

Rejoice! The Lord is with us!

We rejoice in the peace and blessings he brings. AMEN.

**OPENING PRAYER** - ([www.ministrymatters.com](http://www.ministrymatters.com))

Lord, we come to you this day, seeking peace and release from our fears and our darkness. We know that you are here with us, guiding, healing and loving us. Help us to reach out to others with the same love you give to us. Make us people who bring words of compassion and hope, actions of help and lovingkindness, to all we meet. Place our feet on the pathway of life, offering ourselves and our gifts for your holy realm. Encourage us to grow and learn about ministries of reconciliation and compassion. When we falter, pick us up. When we fail, remind us that you believe in us. When we turn and run because of our fear, bring us home again. These things we ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

**OPENING HYMN** - Make Us Holy, Make Us Whole, URW 160

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

In your love, make us whole

May we rest in your compassion

On the long, weary stroll,

In the warmth of your love,

may your peace fill our hearts

May we know the love of Jesus.

By your grace, you console,

make us holy, make us whole.

**SCRIPTURE** - **John 20:19-22**

<sup>19</sup> When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

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

**LISTEN** - *During our current worship series, members of the Healing Prayer Team are sharing their insights on the scripture story and their faith experiences with us. Today, Jen Tellier shared her story.*

In today’s scripture, the disciples are filled with fear. They have been through horrific trauma. First, their leader—Jesus—was betrayed by one of their own, arrested, tortured and crucified. On top of that, Mary Magdalene went to Jesus’ grave only to find his body was gone. Moments later, she saw Jesus but didn’t recognize him until he called her name. Fear and trauma can compromise every aspect of our functioning.

Having undergone these shocking experiences, is it any wonder the disciples had locked themselves in a room out of fear? After all they had gone through, it would be reasonable to expect that each one of them would have tried to cope by burying their fears, anger, and woundedness deep inside. After all, burying and denying our feelings is a common way of coping.

What sadness, fears, anger, or trauma have you walled off or buried inside of you? How have these experiences affected your life? We know buried wounds can contribute to feeling broken or unworthy, to having unhealthy and harmful relationships, and even to addictions and other kinds of self-harm.

In my own case, I believe I developed a wall of pain when I was just a baby. My father died of cancer when I was only 15 months old. His death was a tragedy not only for me but for my mother. As a child, I recall feeling different because I didn’t have 2 parents—like most of my friends and cousins had. I mourned that my mother didn’t have a partner who could share her load. But it wasn’t until a year ago—with the help of our Healing Prayer group and our book studies—that I truly mourned my life without my father and began to heal this long-buried wound. Flora Wuellner—the author of *Miracle*—suggests that no matter how walled-off our sadness, fear, and pain is, God wants to heal us as he gently comes in to bring us healing and peace. He doesn’t

knock the walls down or treat us aggressively. Instead, He comes gently like Jesus saying, “Peace be with you.... Peace be with you.”

When I was 10, I suffered another trauma when my mother nearly died after hemorrhaging for months. For months, I had been doing most of the shopping, cooking and cleaning because my mom seemed to need a lot of rest. I knew she was tired but I had no idea she was sick. Though I must have been terrified when my mother was suddenly flown to another state to undergo emergency surgery and was gone for many days, I have no recollection of how I felt emotionally. Recently, Donna Wong and I were sharing some of our traumatic experiences with each other. As I shared the story about my mom, I had a very clear and detailed memory of the day my aunt took her to see the doctor. I remember what she was wearing, where she was walking, and how the sun was shining. What I have no memory of is how terrified I must have felt about possibly losing my mother and becoming an orphan. I believe my terror and fear were walled off until a few weeks ago. In my case, I believe my sharing with loving and prayerful people like Donna and everyone in our Healing Prayer group began to transform my childhood wounds as God gently began to replace them with healing and peace. Wuellner says that during fragile and fearful times, “the healing love shines in our defended darkness, and God’s Holy Spirit is breathed upon us.” (p. 83) My friends, I felt God’s healing love shine in my long defended darkness just a few weeks ago. What about you? Have you ever needed this kind of healing experience or known someone who did?

The title of this chapter is “The Presence that Transforms Us.” When we are healed and we are at peace, we are ready to be more fully transformed. For the disciples, Jesus was the presence that brought them peace and invited them to receive the Holy Spirit. In the midst of their trauma, Jesus said, “Peace be with you.... Peace be with you.” Flora Wuellner wrote, “Something radical had happened. Their transformation lasted through their lifetime; no one ever turned back. The power of terrorized victimhood changed into the power of joyful devotion.” (p. 80) In the Book of Acts, the disciples were empowered and action-oriented. They preached, taught, baptized, healed, and invited many others to become disciples of Jesus with joyful devotion for the rest of their lives. “Something radical had happened!”

As I contemplated the idea of transformation, I began to wonder how I had been transformed. What led me to become a disciple and what turned me into an action-oriented disciple?

Though many people taught and guided me toward discipleship, I had an experience in 2005 that transformed me from a quiet student and believer to an action-oriented disciple.

In 2005, 7 women from this church felt called to go to New Orleans to help following the horrific destruction of Katrina. Our plan was to go on an UMCOR sponsored Volunteers in Mission trip

to clean up hurricane debris or help build or rehabilitate someone's storm-damaged home. As we prepared for the trip, the number of people struggling to get help for trauma and depression was in the news. I began to wonder if I was being called by God to offer psychological help. My research revealed my services would be welcome. Our plan was that the rest of our team would do construction work and I would provide therapy.

On our first workday, my friends were taken to a house that had storm damage and needed painting. I was taken to several hospitals and mental health clinics to offer my services. Unfortunately, I had been given misinformation about Louisiana's licensure requirements and soon realized I would not be able to provide therapy to those in need.

At the end of an unproductive and frustrating day, I sat amongst patients in a mental health clinic as I waited for my ride. I felt downhearted and distressed as I contemplated my situation. Was I not meant to serve in New Orleans? Had I substituted my own will for God's will? Should I fly home the next day? And then I began to think about all the money I was losing by not being at home and working. Suddenly—as if in response to my being enticed by Satan to focus on money—my thoughts were interrupted by a vision. I saw myself standing with another person in the middle of a road as rays of sun shined down on us. Though I didn't know what to make of the vision, I was sure it was significant. As I thought about the vision, I began to relax and feel more at peace about serving in New Orleans. When I saw my friends that night, several of them told me Lakeba, the homeowner, was really struggling emotionally and needed to spend some time with me. The closed doors, my vision, and my friends' comments made it clear to me that serving as a painter with our VIM team was God's will.

The next day, we got up early, prayed together, and went to Lakeba's house to paint. In the afternoon, Lakeba and I began talking and decided to seek a more private space. As we stood together talking, crying, laughing and praying, I realized we were standing in the middle of a dirt road, hands on each other's shoulders, with sun pouring down upon us. This was my vision! This was God's plan!

Our days of painting were filled with joy and laughter intermingled with prayer. Each morning began with group prayer and each day ended with Bible study and group prayer. If someone was worried about their children, we stopped painting and prayed. If someone wasn't feeling well, we stopped, laid hands on them, and prayed. The day Lakeba told us she felt her house had been invaded by an evil spirit, Pastor Pam gathered all of us into a circle and conducted a spiritual cleansing of the home, Lakeba and her family. The next day, we were filled with joy when Lakeba told us she had slept in her home for the first time in months.

During this week of painting and teamwork, I was changed. I began to work on differentiating between God's will and mine. I learned God had new and different ways of communicating with me. I grew from the discipline of daily Bible study and morning and evening prayers. The power of spur of the moment prayer for needs as they arise touched me deeply and continues to touch me when Pastor Emily invites us to pray in the moment when needs are raised. The freedom we all felt to ask for prayer was uplifting. Being asked to pray for another was strengthening and helped me feel more comfortable praying out loud. Experiencing the power of touch and prayer through the laying on of hands was deeply meaningful and influences my healing prayers to this day. The opportunity to witness the healing of Lakeba's heart and spirit, relationships and house was both fulfilling and eye-opening. In that one week, my desire to learn more about Jesus and the word of God increased exponentially. During this week of prayerful service, I had become a disciple. And finally, over time I became more action-oriented and began to share my faith and spiritual experiences with my family, my church, my friends, and even strangers. This was God's vision. This was God's plan.

Friends, the presence that can heal and transform is with us today. Let us pray. Lord, open our hearts to your will and healing power. Grow us and transform us. Strengthen us as disciples and make us all active instruments of your healing peace. Amen.

### **SONG OF RESPONSE/MEDITATION - Peace / Bethel Music**

*watch and listen:* <https://youtu.be/uW6xcmqfiY4>

**HEALING PRAYER EXPERIENCE** - *Give yourself a quiet time in a safe space with these intentions:*

- *To invite a meaningful and healing prayer experience*
- *To encounter Jesus through prayer*

Friends - the Christ stands among us in risen power. Relax your body and your heart in that presence. Breathe slowly and deeply the breath of the new life. Let it fill your lungs to fullness...then release.

With the knowledge that God's tenderness enfolds you, ask yourself if something within you is afraid, even of God. Does some part of you want to hide behind closed doors, away from intimacy, away from new ways of being healed, new ways of living? Is there something in you that does not want to be looked at?

Picture or think of that part of you hiding like Jesus' disciples in the locked room, seeking protection from something that is hard to face. Might this wish to hide stem from some shock,

fear, betrayal of trust, abuse, fear of rejection? Might it be rooted in an incident long ago or something recent?

Think of or picture that locked place as filled with gentle light, with a presence that does not force open the door but still is with you, bringing comfort and courage. This presence may feel like someone you know and utterly trust.

Allow warmth to fill you. Allow fear and reluctance to slowly move away. The door is still locked and you are free to choose. Imagine the door itself being healed. You are not rebuked or shamed. Know that trust often grows slowly.

A gift is being given to you - God's own Spirit. God believes in you and says: "When you are ready to come forth, I have special work for you, special places for you to go. And I will be with you at every step."

Rest and breathe quietly, letting the light and the empowered gift begin to grow in your inner room, in your heart.

If you feel ready, let that inner, hidden part of you open the door and come forth. If you are not yet ready for this step, know that the healing light will continue to shine in quiet power in your room until the lock itself is healed. When the time is right, you will move forth in hope and joy.

Rest quietly, giving thanks that God's healing and transforming light already shines deep within you.

When you are ready, notice your steady, quiet breathing. Lightly massage your face and hands and continue to give thanks for all that has come through this time of prayer.

**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 for them in silence.*

*We would be honored to pray with you and for you.*

*Please send a note via text, mail, or email or give a call to our Healing Prayer Team.*

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

**CLOSING HYMN** - "Instrument of Peace" The Porter's Gate,  
Watch and Listen here: <https://youtu.be/d0ZYppqcIP0>

### **BENEDICTION** -

As we commit ourselves to be God's people, God's instruments of peace, may we know that God's grace and mercy, God's love and peace surround us and go before us, in fact, they carry us and flow through us. May we walk through each moment then with confidence and hope! Amen!

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

**NEXT WEEK'S SCRIPTURE:** John 21:25

Twin Towers Community News & Notes -

- **Great thanks** to the many who have already completed our [3rd and final re-opening community survey](#). If you have not yet done so, please do...no later than this Sunday, July 25th! Your input matters. Of particular import is the invitation to make our re-opening possible: by becoming a part of our welcome/ushering team and/or our worship tech team. Both of these teams are critical to our ability to safely and easily re-open. We will happily orient and train any who feel called, willing, and able!
- **WHERE's TTUMC?! Join the Fire Bucket Challenge!** Fire season is on its way and we have been challenged to assemble **50 Fire Buckets on August 1st** for use by our Annual Conference's Disaster Response Ministry. We have entered this challenge with our sister churches Chinese Community, Lake Merritt, and Lake Park UMCs. Here are 3 important links you'll need to participate:
  1. For more information about the fire buckets, links to suggested places to purchase items, etc., visit <https://www.cnumc.org/fire-buckets>
  2. To sign up to donate items needed for fire buckets, visit <https://tinyurl.com/FireBucketDonationsSignUp> **Cash donations welcomed!** Please send in a check noting "Fire Bucket" in the memo line!
  3. To RSVP to assemble fire buckets on Aug. 1st at 1:30 p.m., visit <https://tinyurl.com/RSVP4BucketAssembly>

All items to be dropped off at Lake Merritt UMC on August 1st between 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Peace & Grace, *Emily*