



Worship Celebration
October 8, 2023

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

510.522.6744 | twintowers.office@gmail.com | www.twintowersumc.org

WORSHIP GUIDE

Before you begin your time of worship, find a comfortable place to be and gather whatever you might need: your Bible, 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.

OPENING HYMN – “This is the Day” UMH 657

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We gather to worship together,

All: Different people, different lives, different histories,

Leader: Yet all children of the same Parent,

All: Created lovingly by the Source of all life!

Leader: We gather to reconnect with one another,

All: Different people, different lives, different histories,

Leader: Yet all disciples of one Teacher.

All: Jesus, the Word made flesh, dwelling among us.

Leader: We gather with different joys and sorrows, different hopes and fears...

All: Different people, different lives, different histories,

Leader: Yet one people with one God, one faith, one baptism.

All: Let us open ourselves to the presence of God at work in us, among us, and through us.

SCRIPTURE READING – Matthew 22:34-40 and Galatians 3:26-28 NIV

Matthew 22:34-40

34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Galatians 3:26-28

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

SERMON – You can read Pastor Akesa’s message [here](#).

HYMN OF RESPONSE – “Bind Us Together” TFWS 2226

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 also celebrate July birthdays amongst our community.*

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 <https://twintowersumc.org/give>).

CLOSING HYMN – “Sois La Semilla,” UMH 583 verses 1&2

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST’S PEACE!

CHURCH NOTICES, EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Midway Shelter Needs Our Help

We support Midway Shelter, the only women and children shelter operating in Alameda, by providing 30 meals twice a month (2nd Tuesday and 4th Wednesday of each month). Donors can participate as financial donors or as meal preparers.

To participate, please complete the information by clicking [here](#) and we will contact you. We can really use more help with this needed ministry. Thank you!

TODAY! Come and join the Art of Healing Workshop!

THE ART OF HEALING WORKSHOP

with Donna Fado Ivery

Minister, Artist, Author

WHEN?

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14
8:30 am - 3:00 pm

WHERE?

Twin Towers
United Methodist Church Gym
2259 Central Ave., Alameda, CA 94501

**SCAN QR
CODE TO
REGISTER**



**\$20 Registration
Fee includes
materials and
lunch.**

About Donna Fado Ivery



For 17 years after brain injury, Donna relied on a cane, wheelchair, and opiates. Now she walks freely, without these supports.

Donna shares her faith journey through paintings, poetry, and stories, highlighting her experience of a disabling head injury, chronic pain, spiritual resiliency, hope, and healing beyond the expected.

Her award-winning inspirational memoir, *Sleep, Pray, Heal: A Path to Wholeness and Well-Being*, tells her remarkable story. A popular speaker at conferences, seminars, retreats, and meetings across the US, Donna shares the good news of spiritual healing.

Questions? Contact the Twin Towers UMC Office at 510-522-6744 or twintowers.office@gmail.com

Join us on Sunday, October 15 at 10:30 AM!

TWIN TOWERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

170TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL GUESTS

FOLLOWING JESUS. THRIVING IN COMMUNITY. HEALING THE WORLD.



Joey Harrison
Executive Director
and Founder,
Village of Love



**Rev. Dr. Kristin
Stoneking**
California-Nevada
Annual Conference,
Bay District
Superintendent



**Mayor
Marilyn
Ezzy
Ashcraft**



Chris Tam
Founder, All
Good Living
Foundation



**Alameda
Food
Bank**



**Building
Futures**



Amos White
American Red
Cross Community
Coordinator



**Bay Area
Music Project
(BAMP)
Choir**

Join us!!

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10/8/23 Sermon Transcript

From this morning's scripture from the Gospel of Matthew, we heard right at the start from verse 34 that Ysrael read that "Hearing that Jesus silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together." The Pharisees was a group of religious leaders along with the Sadducees did not like Jesus' message, style, and the fact that so many people were following Jesus and they (the Pharisees) wanted to discredit him.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced another religious group known as the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together to see if they could trap Jesus. Among them was one who was an "expert in the law"¹ and this person was likely feeling very confident and decided he had the right question to trap Jesus.

Pharisees, you see, were religious leaders known to have classified over 600 laws and did a lot of work to distinguish between the more important and less important laws. So, these religious leaders felt confident in their knowledge of the laws and especially on this day when one amongst them was a known expert and they decided to have this expert "test" Jesus.

The question asked of Jesus in verse 36 by the Pharisee expert was "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" The reminder that the Pharisee and "expert in the law" was referencing the Ten Commandments anticipating that if Jesus pulls out one or less than the full Ten Commandments, Jesus would be discredited. However, in true Jesus fashion; without missing a step, Jesus responds by answering him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." You're probably wondering well that sounds like a solid response by Jesus. However, what is key and well known to this religious expert is that Jesus responded by quoting from the Old Testament from the book of Deuteronomy (Chapter 6, verse 5) and the book of Leviticus (Chapter 19, verse 15). This expert and the rest of these religious leaders who know these sacred texts well knew by the reference Jesus was making that by fulfilling these two commands that Jesus used in his response of "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself," a person would be keeping all the other laws.

Basically, Jesus' response summarizes the Ten Commandments and the other Old Testament moral laws. This is why these two commands which Jesus used (again, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself,") is called Jesus' Greatest Commandment.

Friends, Jesus was saying to these religious leaders known as Pharisees and to us today that if we truly love God and our neighbor, we will indeed keep the commandments of which some of us may remember with fear and guilt. Jesus' Greatest Commandment is a way to look at God's law positively rather than worrying about all we should not do. But rather, we can and should concentrate on all we can do to show our love for God and others.

With Jesus' Greatest Commandment, we are invited to try loving others as we would love ourselves. That's a tall order because while we say we do and we may want to share what

¹ Matthew 22:35 NIV

we have with others, extend care for others, there is usually a, “but” which draws a boundary on what we are willing to do.

‘I can help in this way when I have the time’ or ‘only when it does not interfere with my schedule and does not interfere with my social calendar.’ Jesus is calling us to love our neighbors like we would love ourselves. The nice neighbors, the not so nice neighbors, the ones who irritate us and those who do not look or speak like us just as we would prefer like those that look like us and speak like us.

As a first-generation foreigner from another country where my grandparents were seeking better opportunities for their children and grandchildren by moving to the U.S from the South Pacific island of Tonga, the immigration story of others resonate with me because that story is my story and it has not always been easy.

The Library of Congress ran an article that in the late 1800’s, there was a lot of people from several parts of the world who left their homes and immigrated to the U.S. The reasons ranged from fleeing crop failure, land and job shortages, rising taxes, and famine. That many of them came to the U.S. because it was considered the land of many possibilities; the land of great economic opportunity and they were right.

There were others who came in search of personal freedom or relief from political and religious persecution. That during the 1870’s and 1880’s, most of those that migrated to the U.S. were from Germany, Ireland, and England before the Civil War. What I find it interesting is that less than 200 years since that time, there is so much drama around immigrants of this time; of building walls to keep others out of our borders, etc., when our history reminds us that we were all immigrants to this land.

I’m grateful for Twin Towers where one of our small groups called the Climate Health Action Team is doing the work to educate themselves and evaluate where opportunities are to support migrant and refugee families impacted by climate change or other reasons. This is why it is important to me to recognize and learn more about the different cultures who are celebrated at different times of the year so we can learn about each other in a desire to see the other, hear the other, and make room for each other.

As I mentioned last month, Hispanic Heritage Month began September 15 through October 15 where we celebrate the rich heritage and the cultural contribution of people of the U.S. who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico, and to Spanish-speaking countries of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Most month-long cultural celebrations start on the first of a month; Hispanic Heritage Month starts on September 15 because a handful of Latin American countries celebrate their independence days on September 15, plus Mexico celebrates on September 16, and Chile on September 18.

Hispanic Heritage Month began as a celebration that lasted one week in 1968 and in 1989, President George H.W. Bush declared that honoring Hispanic Heritage should be a month-long celebration. The idea was that Hispanic Heritage Month would be a period of great significance to many of the immigrated Latinos who live in the U.S. and to their descendants.

In the United Methodist Church, this is an opportunity to celebrate the importance and contributions of the Hispanic culture in worship. United Methodist resources are rich in musical resources that may be included throughout the year, but especially during this month.

I am grateful to Lucca and Anne for bringing to us since mid-September music honoring Hispanic Heritage. In our worship, we can celebrate the lives of different people groups who are important and loved by God. There will be times when these practices will be appreciated and at other times they may not be and perhaps even rejected because there is fear among some communities around us that the more the voice of the Latino population is shared, the more this country loses its identity or that it will be taken over by Latinos.

I believe the U.S. will continue to be a place that is composed of a multitude of different people, groups, and identities and that varied ways of being is only going to continue to diversify. The many voices, cultures, tongues, and backgrounds are what give beauty to this country as we look back to all whom migrated here before us.

God is renewing our church, God is bringing diverse people together, bridging these gaps of race and other differences that have torn us apart for so long. I believe God is answering our prayers for spiritual renewal, surprising us. But we still have a long way to go as a church as are still far away from the heavenly vision. As people of faith, we hope to bring or to see heaven on earth as is told in Revelations 7, and I see part of that in the celebration of the diversity that exists in God's creation and Christ's body. The more diversity our congregations have, the more voices and languages can be heard. Revelations 7 can take place right here, right now, where we worship.

Hispanic Heritage Month, like other months in which other cultures are celebrated gives us the chance to desegregate our worship services—to open up the floor to voices, teachers, and leaders who can share with us spiritual practices and wisdom that we may not know otherwise. This gives us the opportunity to experience something even greater: a demonstration of how we are all united by God and, in our uniqueness, we each hold value.

Church can and should be a leader in bringing people together across these lines that divide us. If this is going to happen, it will mean that churches will have to admit that their systems, their resources, their way of doing things are often set in ways to serve themselves and people like themselves. We will need to admit that this means others have been left out, had their road into our church made difficult. We will have to realign our resources, invite diverse people into leadership, notice our neighbors, and be willing to worship in different ways if we want to reach new, diverse people for Jesus Christ and model to society an alternative to what we have around us now.

Our society desperately needs this model, to see the possibilities of racial reconciliation and systemic change that Christ makes possible in the church. We learn from Jesus who turned over tables in the Temple when religion had arranged or organized things to benefit one group and leave out another. When Jesus Christ came to be born into the flesh and to live a life of sinless perfection, He died for those who would trust in Him. It mattered little who it was that trusted in Him because all who would believe in Him can be brought to repentance and would be saved.

God is never concerned about a person's skin color or their national origin because those who are the children of God are citizens of the kingdom, not a kingdom of mankind. Let me say that again, those who are the children of God are citizens of the kingdom, not a kingdom of man or womankind. This is what I think of when I hear today's second scripture for this

morning from Paul's letter to the Galatians Chapter 3 verse 28 where Paul is saying that our natural inclination is to feel uncomfortable around other people who are different from us and that we want to be around those who are like us. But when we allow our differences to separate us from our fellow believers, we are disregarding biblical teaching. The reminder to make a point to seek out and appreciate people who are not just like you and your friends. You may just find out that you have a lot in common with them. The reminder from this scripture from Galatians that says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." We all come from different places with different cultures and practices but in Jesus, we are reminded we are one. In this oneness may we see the other and make room for the other in new ways in Jesus' name. As we prepare for our 170th Anniversary celebration and evaluate making space for the Warming Shelter this winter, please be in prayer about how we can make room for others who need help by sharing what we have.

Please join me in prayer before our Hymn of Response in a prayer known as the Prayer of the Farm Workers' Struggle written by Cezar Chavez, one of the most influential Latinos in the history of the United States. Let us pray:

"Show me the suffering of the most miserable, so I will know my people's plight. Free me to pray for others, for you are present in every person. Help me take responsibility for my own life, so that I can be free at last. Grant me courage to serve others, for in service there is true life. Give me honesty and patience, so that the Spirit will be alive among us. Let the Spirit flourish and grow, so that we will never tire of the struggle. Let us remember those who have died for justice, for they have given us life. Help us love even those who hate us, so we can change the world. Amen."