



We Are Partners

Christ as our all in all

Worship Celebration **July 31, 2022**

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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, 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 PRAYER [Rev. Steve Garnaas-Holmes]

Gracious God, we thank you for this time with you. Help us to let go of our attachments to what we think we want, long enough to listen to you. Help us to set our minds on your grace. Prepare us to be changed, and to listen to you, so that we may trust and follow and serve. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CENTERING HYMN – “Sanctuary”

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXC8bH4huLg>

SCRIPTURE READING – Colossians 3:1-11 NSRV

¹ So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, ³ for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. ⁷ These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. ⁸ But now you must get rid of all such things: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. ¹¹ In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, enslaved and free, but Christ is all and in all!

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

LISTEN – *You can listen to the sermon [here](#).*

We continue looking at the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians where his purpose was to help members of the early church understand what it meant to be followers of Jesus. This because as we heard last week, many early Christians were unsure of the future and were drawn to a number of false teachings. Their uncertainty of the future was because Jesus had not returned within a few years since his resurrection and ascension.

The false teachings that were attracting early members of the church claiming that people could reach a more advanced level in their spiritual development or could have the ability of unique understanding or knowledge. This led to others disagreeing about who could be included in the early church. We hear the dissension amongst a community that was built on care for the other.

With the passage of time and Jesus still had not returned, people found their faith wavering and so they started to question what they believed or became drawn to other definitions of faith. We see such uneasiness now in our own time because here we are centuries from the time of today's text and Jesus still has not returned.

With the pains of wars in our own land, as well as afar, the impact of climate change, the challenges in our country's political arena, the current economic situation with rising inflation costs and threat of recession, the ravages and injustices of the many 'isms' that we allow to separate us, let alone the day-to-day challenge of living life with physical challenges and unexpected ailments, Christians are questioning their faith while so many others are not interested in any religion.

The Apostle Paul's words in the third chapter of his letter to the Colossians was his way of providing clarity on the behaviors of Christians because remember these are new believers of the early church. That as followers of Jesus who chose to accept Jesus' teachings of grace, love and acceptance of others, they were to put on a new self as opposed to their former life and lifestyles.

In verse 2, Paul challenges the Colossians and us to "set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth."¹ To be intentional about doing better because we know better. To not be distracted by what others are doing or saying or what is going on around us where we may want to follow along what others are doing. That if we are not careful of distractions or of our impatience, we may find ourselves in spaces and places that is not good for us and cause us harm.

Distractions and impatience together are problematic for anyone but especially in a church.

¹ Colossians 3:2 NRSV.

This because our not having certainty of God's plan can deter us from keeping our focus on seeking God's will through the time needed to grow and strengthen our faith. And if we are not careful, it is in those distractions and our impatience is when we can be vulnerable to selfish motivations, being vulnerable to the fear of failure, or experiencing anxiety over not having enough resources in people or money; all of which can cause conflict and be harmful to what was once a loving community.

We hear in verse 3 words that can seem harsh that "for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." That as followers of Jesus we chose to put aside our former selves as we share the love of Christ and work to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God."² Verse 3 further says that our future is hidden away from us by God; that our life "is hidden with Christ in God."³ Not easy to hear for those of us who want to plan and know our every move; however, it does align with the realization that some things in life is a mystery and we will not know the answer on this side of heaven.

This is where our faith steps in; reminding us to trust in the one whom we follow. 2 Corinthians 5:7 reminds us that "we live by faith, not by sight" but I know this is not always easy to follow. Which is why this letter for new believers was needed then and applies to us today when we are confronted with so many other distractions, desires and pursuits that may distract us and not be good for us.

This morning's text from Chapter 3 of Paul's letter to the Colossians is reminding them, and us, to rely on God in faith. That we, like the early church, will need to wait and have patience. Now that is a loaded request. How many of you have prayed the prayer, "Lord please grant me patience but please hurry?" or something close to it?

I'm sure this does not apply to everyone here at Twin Towers but waiting can and does bring out the worst in people; waiting in line at the grocery store, waiting at the bank, or how about a slow response in the customer service chat line where some people feel they can type whatever words they probably would not say out loud? How about approaching a light and it turns yellow and you are behind someone who is going at the speed limit? Again, I'm sure this does not apply to you all, but I have noticed and have been one of those people that when we have to wait, bad behaviors can appear.

Verses 5-10 is speaking to the areas where we should evaluate and put behind us; the reminder to look toward the Christ in each of us. To do the hard work of self-reflection and intentionally stripping off those old self habits that can distract us and cause harm to others and ourselves. The early church had a hard time in seeing how they were connected to each other in Christ because of how their differences informed their identity. The differences

² Micah 6:8 NSRV.

³ Colossians 3:3 NRSV.

between Gentile and Jew, slave and free to name a few. Their identity in Christ was so new that they were being reminded to put away; or “put to death”⁴ their former identities. Making any change is difficult but one of a person’s identity, our upbringing and everything that we bring, good and bad is very hard.

Today is the last day of our first month together and we have journeyed together as partners over this month getting to know one another. I wanted to review what we looked at in our journey of this last month.

First, we looked at how we hear God in the voice of others. That sometimes it will be through the voice of others that we find opportunities to bring the light of Jesus on the need for justice, or to experience transformative blessings, or we more fully understand how much God loves us and wants a personal relationship with us. That together as partners extending grace to one another, assuming positive intent and listening for God in each other’s voice, we will be able to discern God’s will for our beloved Twin Towers community and neighbors.

Next, we looked at how we see God in others by accepting others as God sees us. That along our journey we will have opportunities to equip the Amos’ amongst us for leadership roles and we should remember that the prophet Amos, an ordinary man by society’s definition, was called by God to do extraordinary things. The reminder that God does not call the equipped, but God equips His call.

Then we looked at the ways we journey together discerning God’s will in Jesus’ name by looking at the story of Lazarus’ sisters, Martha and Mary, when Jesus visited the sisters. That while serving as Martha did was important, but just as important was attending to one’s spiritual life at Jesus’ feet listening, reflecting, and praying. The reminder that it is a relationship that is critical to our own spiritual life—how are we being fed and nurtured beyond Sunday morning services. Important because we cannot serve from an empty cup; so, we must attend to the growth and strengthening of our own spiritual life.

Then last week we looked at the start of Paul’s letter to the Colossians as we evaluated our shared identity in Christ as believers to keep moving forward in times of change and challenges. That our shared identity will move us forward together in spite of uncertainty or the awkwardness of change.

I praise God for the privilege and honor of being your pastor and I thank you for welcoming me so graciously and with such immense generosity. I am so grateful to be on this journey with you as partners together being about the work of God serving this community and our neighbors in love in the name of Jesus. I am very excited to imagine with you what God has

⁴ Colossians 3:5 NRSV.

in store for the future of Twin Towers because of your love.

From today's text, Paul is reminding the early church and us that if Christ is our all in all; as Christ is all and in all, then we need to be self-aware of our own selves and where we place our trust. Is it in our own strength, our knowledge, our education, our money, or are we trusting Christ to be our all and in all? Because if Christ is in all of us, then we are inspired and guided by the same spirit which is greater than us. That if Christ is in all of us, then we are leaning into new ways of trusting instead of our old ways of relating to one another based on our differences. That if Christ is in all of us, then together, we are seeking God's will first in all things.

That while we do not know precisely what the future holds for our lives, we have assurance in knowing who holds the future. This because we know our faith in Jesus connects us as believers. That we remember that God is near to us and that our actions together as partners flow from our gratitude for God's gift in Jesus. That is reassurance that we as partners can count on as we journey together. Amen.

HYMN OF RESPONSE – “You Are My All in All”

W&S #3040

Listen [here](#) for a gift featuring our worship team of Lucca, Barack, and Anne.

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).

CLOSING HYMN – “Be Thou My Vision”

UMH #451

Listen [here](#) for a gift featuring all within the building.

BENEDICTION

Go forth in peace to love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all as we journey through this next week. Amen.

POSTLUDE

Listen [here](#) for a gift from our worship team featuring Anne.

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!

Please make note of the following invitations:

Dine & Connect Need Help on 8/1 – Thank you to those of you who have already signed up to cook and serve at our once a month Dine & Connect ministry. You're invited to join us if you haven't had a chance to participate in our Dine & Connect ministry on August 1, starting at noon and will be serving our guests at 4:00 p.m. beginning with our circle of gratitude in the garden area outside of the Fireside Room.

Upcoming book study beginning 8/5 – A new book study led by Deacon Mike Friedrich called "Sermon on the Mount" by Amy-Jill Levine will be starting Friday, August 5 for 3 weeks in August and 3 weeks in September at 7:00 p.m. on Fridays. Please reach out to Deacon Mike for additional information.

Small Group Gatherings 8/7 & 8/8 – You are invited to join one of the upcoming three Small Group gatherings to be in fellowship and conversations that include Pastor Akesa. Please join us by signing up for the session that works for you. The sessions are Saturday, August 6 (10:00 a.m. and another at 3:30 p.m. both in person) and on Sunday, August 7 (11:00 a.m. via Zoom). For planning purposes, please sign up by clicking [here](#). Information on location will be sent to participants for each session.

Concert "Pandemic & Racism: What's Going on" 8/7 & 8/14 – In support of our very own Lucca Troutman who is performing with the Afterglow Chorus for 2 special memorial concerts on Sunday, August 7 & 14, honoring the lives and victims lost to both the pandemic and racism in the past two years. Tickets are available at <https://www.afterglowchorus.com/>.

Holy Land 2023 Pilgrimage – After five years, the Friends of Wadi Foquin are renewing their Holy Land pilgrimages in Spring 2023. Those interested in participating in this pilgrimage will need to confirm interest in joining before September 1, 2022. For more information, please click [here](#) or contact Deacon Mike Friedrich. There will be more information to come if you are interested in going on the trip or in a group study in advance of the trip.

Need help with groceries – If you or you know of anyone who needs help with groceries once a week or once a month, the Alameda Food Bank has a Community Market available for individuals who live or work in the City of Alameda. Please click [here](#) for the QR code and for more information.