

October 2, 2022 + 10:30 A.M.
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost/World Communion Sunday

We Join in Worship

*If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker, or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of our
Prayground, the extra space across the aisle from the sound booth.*

**Some of the components of this worship service were provided by the PC(USA) as a way for us to celebrate World Communion Sunday together across the Church. These resources were prepared by Rev. Katie Owen Aumann.*

PRELUDE *Let Us Break Bread Together* Albert Zabel

WELCOME

CHORAL INTROIT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

***THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

Christ's peace is with us always, no matter where we may be. And so, Christ's peace is with each and every one of us in this moment. Let us take it in. Let us really feel it. If able, please stand where you are, look around, and make signs of Christ's peace to each other. If you are at home, give somebody a call after the service to share Christ's peace!

*** CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Isaiah 55*)

Leader: From north and south and east and west,
ALL: all Creation sings forth your praises!
Leader: The mountains and the hills burst into song;
ALL: the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
Leader: Your steadfast love never ceases.
ALL: With joy and peace, let us worship God together.

***OPENING HYMN:** "Come to the Table of Grace" (Glory to God 507)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: God's grace was given to us in Christ before the ages began. In spite of God's love for us and gift of love to us, we often act in destructive and hateful ways. Trusting in Christ's mercy that never ends, let us with honesty confess our sins before God and one another.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

Gracious Lord, you created the whole world and called it good, but we look out at your world and see division and suffering. You call us to maintain the unity of spirit in the bond of peace, but we choose division over diversity, confrontation over civility, conflict over peace born from justice. You call us to love the least of these among us, but we hear the cries of the oppressed and choose our own comfort. We allow senseless suffering rather than sacrifice for our neighbors. Forgive us. Grant us fresh vision to see one another as siblings in Christ. Rekindle in us your gifts — the spirit of power, love and self-discipline — that with faith in Christ, we might be made new and be part of bringing forth your peaceable kingdom. Amen.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: We call to mind your promises and therefore we find hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. God's mercies are new every morning. Believe the good news.

ALL: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FAITH (*The Apostles' Creed*)

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

We Hear God's Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: (Unison)

Gracious God, we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth. Make us hungry for this heavenly food, that it may nourish us today in the ways of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, the bread of heaven. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON: Joel 2:21-28

EPISTLE LESSON: 2 Timothy 1:1-14

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 26:20-29

SERMON: Latter Rain

CHORAL ANTHEM: Bread of the World Dennis Eliot

We Respond in Faith

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

Christ's table is wide, and his welcome is for all. Jesus dined with sinners and saints, with farmhands and foreigners, with disciples and doubters, with children and cherished friends, with the outcast and the outspoken, with lepers and loved ones. And just as he ate at others' tables, when Christ set his banquet table, he welcomed us all, too. As we gather around Christ's table, we are united with all of God's beloved across the world through the love and grace made known in bread broken and cup passed. So come to the table where we witness Christ's love and peace for all.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Leader: The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

ALL: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

ALL: It is right to give our thanks and praise

We give you thanks and praise, God of all Creation, for the blessing of your earth and all your children, for the mercies you pour forth in fresh rains and harvests of plenty, for joy that comes in the morning. We are a grateful people. You created a world of harmony and peace, but our yearning for power and privilege throughout history led to division and conflict, suffering and violence. We give thanks that you sent prophets and poets to lament and remind to bear witness and call us to yet a better way, to write the vision of a peaceable kingdom for all to see. With fresh eyes and renewed hope, we join our voices with those around the world and with your heavenly chorus to sing: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

We give you thanks that in the fullness of time, you sent your Son Jesus to bear witness to your mercy, grace and love. In his living, he showed us how to love. In his dying, he offered us undeserved mercy. In his rising, he granted us grace. Through the gift of faith, even faith as small as a mustard seed, his witness rekindles in us the gifts of God, not so that we can hold onto these gifts for ourselves but so that we can be united across the globe as one family of faith gathered around one table, sharing in one holy meal, sustained by a love that binds us together in peace. Let us proclaim the mysteries of faith. **Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon our many tables trusting that Christ is the host of our sacred meal together. May the blessing of grain from the earth and fruit of the vine be a reminder of the true joy of communion that unites us in one worldwide covenant of love. Sustained by your Word, fed by this holy meal, may we go out with joy and be led forth in peace; through Christ our peace. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me. Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

BREAKING THE BREAD AND POURING THE CUP

Leader: The bread of heaven. The cup of the new covenant. The gifts of God for the people of God.

ALL: Let us keep the feast!

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader: Today we have joined our siblings across the world in tasting and seeing that the Lord is good! Let us give our tithes and offerings so that we can continue to help the Body of Christ thrive all over the globe. If you are here in person today and have not yet done so, please place your offering in the plate as you leave. If you are here virtually today, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option. Now let us take a moment to reflect on stewardship as we hear the offertory.

*** DOXOLOGY:**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen!

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)

Gracious God, we dedicate these gifts to you and to the work of your Kingdom that spans the world, reaching every place and context. Give us Wisdom as we seek to fulfill our role in the Body of Christ. It is in his name that we pray. Amen.

We Go Into the World

*** CLOSING HYMN:** “Blest Be the Tie that Binds” (438)

BENEDICTION

CHORAL BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *God of Grace and God of Glory*

David H. Hegarty

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Life of the Church

PEEK AT THE WEEK

SUNDAY 10/2:	Adult Study – 9:00 AM Worship In Person & Online – 10:30 AM Communion
TUESDAY 10/4:	Deacons – 6:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 10/5:	“Bring Your Own Bible” Bible Study – 7 to 8 PM (Zoom)
THURSDAY 10/6:	Choir – 7:30 PM
SATURDAY 10/8:	Cook for Shelter – 1:00 PM

Announcements

- **PASTOR APPRECIATION SUNDAY - OCTOBER 9Th** Sunday, October 9th is Pastor Appreciation Sunday. Come to worship on the 9th and celebrate Pastor Tyler's ministry with us. There will be special treats after worship! Let's show him how blessed we are to have him as our pastor!
- **PEACE AND GLOBAL WITNESS SPECIAL OFFERING** There are dedicated envelopes in the narthex for this special offering of the PC(USA). 50% will go to the denomination's peacemaking efforts around the world, 25% will go to the Wabash Valley Presbytery's peace and gun safety initiative, and 25% will go to FPCH's Ministry of Mission.

- **SOUP SALE OCTOBER 9!** Grab some delicious soup after worship on October 9 and help with our general fund. It's a win-win!
- **VOCAL CHOIR PRACTICE ON THURSDAYS AT 7:30** All are welcome at all singing abilities! We are a low-stress, high-fun group dedicated to bringing glory to God! Let Suzanne Gruoner know if you are interested in joining. You can also let Pastor Tyler know.
- **FELLOWSHIP HOSTS** Our Ministry of Hospitality is seeking hosts for fellowship! There is a sign up board downstairs. Hosting can be as simple as bringing store-bought snacks or as fun as making something if you have the skills!
- **ADULT CONNECTIONS** Everyone is invited to one or both of our classes! The Sunday morning "Bible in Today's World" class is on Sunday mornings at 9 AM in the upstairs meeting room. Bring Your Own Bible (BYOB) meets Wednesday evenings at 7 PM on Zoom. You don't need to have participated before in order to join, so please feel free to join at any time!
- **YOUTH CONNECTIONS** Our regular youth connections gatherings will meet after worship on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. Our next meeting is Sunday, October 9, after worship. Join us for food, fellowship, fun, and exploration of faith!
- **PRAYER WALL** Inside door D, near the church office, there is an interactive prayer station where all are invited to participate whenever you are in the church building. A piece of chicken wire is hanging on the wall, and there are multiple colors of ribbons on a table, each representing a type of prayer. The idea is for you to choose one or more ribbons that represent the type of prayer you need or want to lift up at that time, and then tie the ribbons onto the chicken wire. There is nothing to write down, and all prayers remain anonymous except to our God, who knows our needs even before we do! If you have any questions about this interactive and visual prayer station, contact Heather Casiano.
- **READ THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR:** We want to encourage everyone to make the Bible a regular part of your daily life no matter how much reading you do. The reading plan can be found in the Larger View each month and on our church's website (www.fpchighland.org). Contact Heather Casiano for more info at hcasiano@fpchighland.org. May this year in the Bible be a blessing to you!

Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:

- **BLESSING BOX** Our Blessing Box has gained even more importance in this pandemic. Economic impacts are dire, and the most vulnerable in our midst are the most harmed. Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates on food items before donating them.
- **GOT SNEAKERS FUNDRAISER** We are collecting pairs of gently worn, used and new sneakers to help earn money for our projects and programs here at FPCH and help the environment at the same time! Blue bins for the shoes will be located in the sanctuary narthex, inside door D by the office, and outside the church building by door D. *Please note that we can only use sneakers/tennis shoes!*

Prayer List

Anthony
George Nelson
Brady Vanes
George Griner
Guy Hendricks
Bill and Anettia Holmes
Daniel Litwicki
David Markley
David Kingen
Carmelo
Diana and Ray Mendoza
Janet Orem
John Mullen
Jeanne Nestor
Cindy Waltz and Sister
Andrew Bobalik
Gale Snyder
Yvonne Suroviak
U. Chong
Wendy
Georgette Sknerski
Jakob Holden
Denise Matthys
Steve & Melinda
Gary Studer
Jan Oprea
Janet Vargo
Melba McGinnis
Samantha Toren
Chris
Kirby Edus
Robbie
Kate Abernethy
Virginia Marshall

Laura Buono Domsic
The Windstrups
Ruth Dekker
Rick Parker
Barbara Morton
Caroline Studer
Robert Lestina
Laura Wisner
Cary and Jennifer Pearson
Carol Finley
Huilin
Holly Letnich
Lily Renfro
Marla and Jerry Renfro
Jaden Mendez
Rev. Paula Cooper
Jack Sum
Frank Falzone
Myrna Grove
Doug and Sue Matthews
Kiki Ho
Janet Terpstra and Family
Robert Urich
Jane Vance
Richard Simmons
Michelle
Glen Nahler
Lodean Johnson
Carol Brechner
Claudia Szymaszek
Jennifer Skippergosh
Tammy
Tony B
Tom

Joel 2:21-29

- ²¹ Do not fear, O soil;
be glad and rejoice,
for the Lord has done great things!
- ²² Do not fear, you animals of the field,
for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
the tree bears its fruit;
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.
- ²³ O children of Zion, be glad,
and rejoice in the Lord your God,
for he has given the early rain for your vindication;
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the later rain, as before.
- ²⁴ The threshing floors shall be full of grain;
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.
- ²⁵ I will repay you for the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army that I sent against you.
- ²⁶ You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.
- ²⁷ You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel
and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.
- ²⁸ Then afterward
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

2 Timothy 1:1-14

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

² To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

⁸ Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, in the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, and this grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, ¹² and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard the deposit I have entrusted to him. ¹³ Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Matthew 26:20-29

²⁰ When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve disciples, ²¹ and while they were eating he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” ²² And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, “Surely not I, Lord?” ²³ He answered, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.” ²⁵ Judas, who betrayed him, said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” He replied, “You have said so.”

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Latter Rain

Joel 2:21-29; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Matthew 26:20-29

Happy World Communion Sunday! This is always one of my favorite worship services of the year. For, it is an intentional, purposeful, purpose-filled celebration of the truth that the Body of Christ is a body that embodies the vast diversity of God’s creation—of minds, spirits, and bodies. Yes, it is a celebration of the embodiment of Christ’s body, and it is especially meaningful because we do so through the sharing of the sacrament in which we receive that body broken for us. (Ha! I bet you’ve never heard the word “body” so many times in such a short time before!) Let me say again, Happy World Communion Sunday!

We have these beautiful banners and paraments, so lovingly and expertly sewn by Lois Fozkos, gifted to us by our partners from Chimwemwe Presbyterian Church in Kitwe, Zambia. And I have this beautiful shirt to go along with them! Thank you to the Women’s Fellowship of the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa! These are gifts of profound spiritual generosity, and they are a reflection of the mutuality of First Presbyterian Church of Highland’s spiritual generosity as well. I can think of no greater joy in this moment than the joy of knowing that the love of Jesus is so deep, so broad, and so high that it stretches from Zambia to Indiana and beyond! Speaking of that magnificent reach of Christ’s love, I am going to take a moment to repeat an exercise that we did several months ago on the day of Pentecost, for I think it is going to take our collective breath away. I am going to give us a sample of just how spiritually connected we are in our worship.

On any given Sunday, we have people worshipping with us who are from Highland, Hammond, Griffith, Gary, Munster, Schererville, Shelbyville, South Holland, Lansing, Chicago, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Taiwan, Indianapolis, Michiana, Alaska, New York, Puerto Rico, Zambia, India, Kenya, Mexico, Zimbabwe, the U.K., Malawi, Sri Lanka, Senegal, and South Korea! Wow! We don’t all see each other. Some of us are worshipping in person. Some of us are worshipping online. Some of us are worshipping by reading hard copies of our services sent by mail. But we are most assuredly worshipping together in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the miracle of spiritual connection! God is good! All the time! And all the time, God is good!

Speaking of the Holy Spirit and our spiritual connection, I can think of no better day than World Communion Sunday to do a second round of celebrating the falling of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost. If you think back to early June, hopefully you will remember a joyful party of a worship service during which we reflected upon the diversity of languages, races, countries of origin, genders, sexualities, and abilities present in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit filled hearts, mouths, and ears, making it so that everybody could understand each other across the many boundaries and barriers of difference that our societies tend to create. Hopefully you will remember moving your hips and hands a bit as we sang, *“Siyahamba ekukhanyeni kwenkos. Caminamos en la luz de Dios! We are marching in the light of God! Siyahamba ekukhanyeni kwenkos.”* Hopefully you will remember hearing about manifestations of the Spirit in fire and wind!

Well, on this second celebration of the falling of the Holy Spirit, we are also going to hear about the Spirit manifested in water, specifically in rain. We do not know for sure the time in history when the prophet Joel prophesied, but many scholars think that he was one of our post-exilic prophets, like Haggai who urged us to build the temple last week. If so, then Joel would have known his people to have been formed both in Babylon and Jerusalem, with very identities that spanned traditional difference. With this knowledge, he proclaimed,

*“O children of Zion, be glad,
and rejoice in the Lord your God,
for he has given the early rain for your vindication;
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the latter rain, as before.
The threshing floors shall be full of grain;
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.”*

Later in the same passage he spoke words that made their way to the account of the day of Pentecost as told in the book of *Acts*:

*“Then afterward
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.”*

I have heard that part many times, but I have rarely ever heard the part about the early and the latter rain. At least in Presbyterian churches, that is. I have come across it several times, though, in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches. In different parts of the world, I have seen churches with names like “Latter Rain Ministries” and “Latter Rain Fellowship.” I have heard sermons and songs about the latter rain. I have always been curious because, again, as Presbyterians it is a phrase that we very rarely engage. In my curiosity I have explored. In my exploring, I have found that it goes back to this very passage from *Joel*, with all of its traditional connection to the day of Pentecost, with an interpretation of the “early rain” describing the first falling of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples in Jerusalem and the “latter rain” describing the Holy Spirit continuing to fall upon people to this day. The latter rain is thus the phenomenon of people in the here and now being baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Loved ones, when I reflect on the realities of our congregation and of the Church universal today, I cannot help but think that we are being showered by the blessings of the latter rain. I cannot help but think that we are experiencing another Pentecost moment. How else can we explain the ways that we have managed to stay spiritually connected in the midst of so much isolation and separation? How else can we explain the persistence of this spiritual connection in the midst of so much tumult and turmoil in our lives? How else can we explain the maintenance of this spiritual connection from sanctuary to garden to living rooms to assisted living facilities to hotel rooms to back porches? How else can we explain the spreading of this spiritual connection across national borders, across oceans, across languages, across denominations?

Not very long after I moved to Kitwe, Zambia, I was told about a Presbyterian Church in the neighborhood near to my home on the campus of the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation. Chimwemwe was a sprawling community with houses, stores, restaurants, schools, and churches packed tightly together for kilometers. I got lost on more than one occasion wandering its many winding streets. Thankfully I could always find people drinking Chibuku Shake Shake—a very different spirit than the one we’ve been discussing!—outside the bars that dotted the neighborhood who would welcome me for a chat and then show me how to get to where I was trying to go. So it was that one of my new friends showed me how to get to Chimwemwe Presbyterian Church. I am sure that I was quite a sight on Sundays after that when I would stop for a visit outside the bars in my collar or Sunday best on my way to or from church! But I digress.

The first time I went to Chimwemwe Presbyterian Church, I encountered a praise and worship service like none I had ever encountered before in a Presbyterian church. There was a full thirty minutes at least of spontaneous worship, with the choir of twenty- and thirty-somethings singing with some of the most astonishingly beautiful voices I have ever heard, alternating between Bemba, Tumbuka, English, and what many Charismatic Christians call the “heavenly language” and what others call “speaking in tongues.” People were dancing, people were swaying, people were jumping. And somehow something caught in this frozen chosen American Presbyterian, and I started praying and singing and moving my body spontaneously. Now *that* was new to me! But it was also natural. I didn’t feel self conscious or strange in the many ways that I obviously stood out. Rather, I felt *connected* in the Spirit.

I would go back to Chimwemwe Presbyterian Church many times throughout my time in Zambia, trying to make it on Sundays when I wasn’t traveling for the work I was doing or being called upon to preach in other local congregations. I would inevitably be welcomed into worship and then into the home of Reverend Masauso Nyirenda, first lady Margaret Banda, and their daughter Chimwemwe, who shared a name with the neighborhood. We would feast upon nshima and sausage and talk about the state of the church across the world. There would often be Nigerian preachers on the TV while we discussed Presbyterianism in Southern Africa and the United States. Afterwards, I would wander the streets again, find my friends outside the bars, and try to solve the world’s problems with them before heading home. “Heading home” would then mean being welcomed into other homes along the way for snacks and chats or getting caught up in soccer matches in various yards on campus. When I would finally get the chance to crash for a Sunday afternoon nap, I would do so full of a feeling that could only be described as spiritual fullness.

I went to Zambia with the purpose of experiencing and learning from a place where the Church is flourishing in ways that often seem elusive in the West. I was to bring back my learnings to the United States and use them to inspire my own ministry. I learned many things, but what I keep coming back to is the centrality of community bound together by spiritual connectedness. I did not understand very much of what was being sung or spoken, but I could walk into worship and feel like I was at home in the Spirit. It was never about numbers. Some Sundays there were similar numbers of worshipers as we see here today. It was about being welcomed, being loved, and feeling like I was in full Communion with God and God’s children because of the palpability of the Holy Spirit in the space.

I would feel this same phenomenon in other worshipping communities across the country. The organization that hosted me, called Theological Education by Extension in Zambia, had me travel with them to congregations of the United Church of Zambia, the Reformed Church of Zambia, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, the Anglican Church, the Community of Christ, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. In pretty much every church in pretty much every context—from large, wealthy, urban congregations to tiny, impoverished, rural congregations—I felt that same spiritual connectedness. I felt the baptism of the latter rain.

And here’s the thing. Ever since feeling that spiritual connectedness there, I have also felt it here in the United States. Trust and believe that the Holy Spirit is moving through communities like the First Presbyterian Church of Highland! Our ways of manifesting the Spirit may not look or sound the same as they do in Chimwemwe Presbyterian Church, but we are most definitely alive in the Spirit! It took complete displacement into a context that was previously unknown to me, though, for my eyes to be opened to the workings of the Holy Spirit in my own context. I wonder if the people of Judah and Benjamin experienced that back in Jerusalem after having spent their lives in Babylon. I wonder if the Church in the West needs some more experiences of displacement, of sacred encounter with difference, in order to open more hearts and eyes to the

truths of spiritual connectedness across the world and thus to the truth of the Holy Spirit living within each and every one of us. Maybe we all need to loosen up a bit, free ourselves a bit, lift up our arms, and feel the latter rain on our skin!

On weekdays I would sometimes go to morning worship in the chapel of the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation. For those services, we would always close with this song:

*Bind us together, Lord, Bind us together
With cords that cannot be broken.
Bind us together, Lord,
Bind us together,
Bind us together with love.*

*There is only one God,
There is only one King;
There is only one Body,
That is why we sing
Bind us together, Lord, Bind us together
With cords that cannot be broken.
Bind us together, Lord,
Bind us together,
Bind us together with love.
Amen!*

Come to the Table of Grace 507

Capo 3: (D) (A) (Bm) (D7/A) (G)

F C Dm F7/C B^b

1 Come to the ta - ble of grace. Come to the

(A) (D) (A) (D) (Em)

C F C F Gm

ta - ble of grace. This is God's ta - ble; it's

(D/A) (G) (D/A) (A7) (D) (G) (D)

F/A B^b F/C C7 F B^b F

not yours or mine. Come to the ta - ble of grace.

- 2 Come to the table of peace...
- 3 Come to the table of love...
- 4 Come to the table of hope...
- 5 Come to the table of joy...

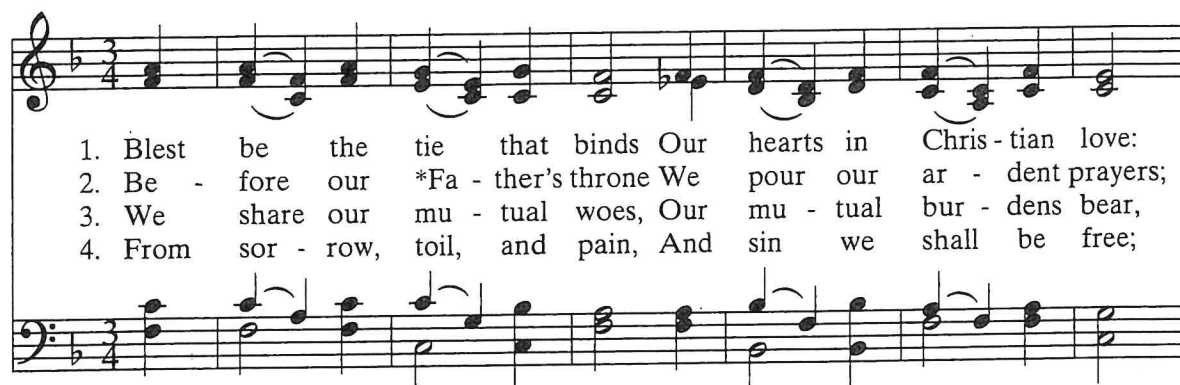
Blest Be the Tie That Binds

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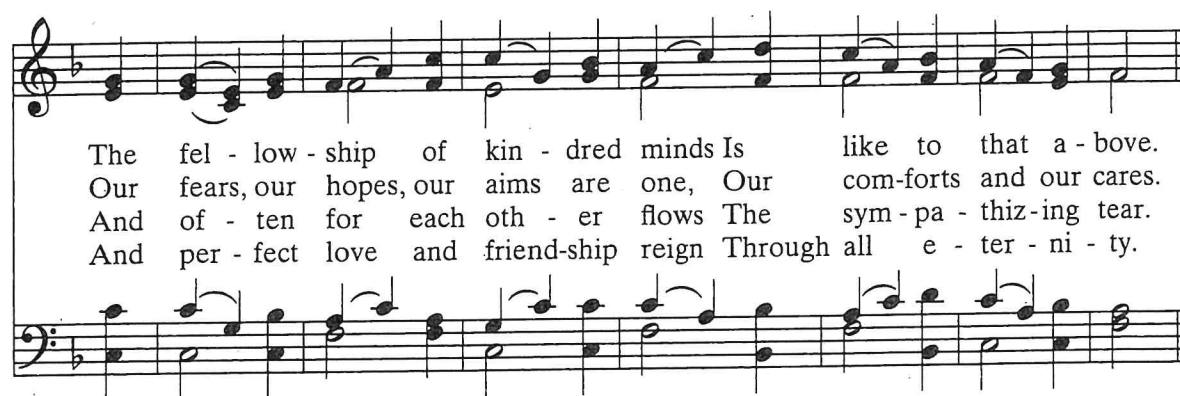
DENNIS SM

Johann Georg Nägeli (1773-1836)
Arr. Lowell Mason, 1845

John Fawcett, 1782



1. Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Chris-tian love:
2. Be - fore our *Fa - ther's throne We pour our ar - dent prayers;
3. We share our mu - tual woes, Our mu - tual bur - dens bear,
4. From sor - row, toil, and pain, And sin we shall be free;



The fel - low - ship of kin - dred minds Is like to that a - bove.
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, Our com-forts and our cares.
And of - ten for each oth - er flows The sym - pa - thiz-ing tear.
And per - fect love and friend-ship reign Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

*Or "Maker's."