

Unsettled but Unafraid: A Liturgy for Worshipping at Home

Week of May 24, 2020 (Seventh Sunday of Easter)
St. Simons Presbyterian Church

Although we are not able to gather in-person for worship, we are able to gather in spirit. This week's liturgy is designed to be used alongside the worship video, although it can be used on its own. Use it individually or as a family. If you are using it in a family setting, consider giving each person one part to lead. If using individually, try to carve out 10-minutes to quietly read, reflect, and pray through. No matter how you worship, God will show up. Liturgy this week was compiled by Rev. Annie Franklin Arvin with a reflection written by Kate Buckley, Parish Associate.



Opening Psalm - Psalm 22:25-31

I offer praise in the great congregation
because of you;
I will fulfill my promises
in the presence of those who honor God.
Let all those who are suffering eat and be full!
Let all who seek the Lord praise him!
I pray your hearts live forever!
Every part of the earth
will remember and come back to the Lord;
every family among all the nations will worship you.
Because the right to rule belongs to the Lord,
he rules all nations.
Indeed, all the earth's powerful
will worship him;
all who are descending to the dust
will kneel before him;
my being also lives for him.
Future descendants will serve him;
generations to come will be told about my Lord.
They will proclaim God's righteousness
to those not yet born,
telling them what God has done.

Prayer of Confession (included in video)

As members of Christ's body, we confess the reality of sin and brokenness in personal and common life. Trusting in God's abundant grace, we approach God with confidence confessing together the sinful state of the world and our lives. Although today we may pray this prayer alone or only with our families, we pray this prayer together with our church in Spirit.

God of Grace,

You call us to rejoice in you; yet we sit silently.

You teach us to care for our neighbor; yet we look around for someone else to act first.

You empower us to boldly sing of your love, yet we whisper timidly or not at all.

Forgive us O God. Meet us on the desert road once more.

Proclaim the Good News to us again.

Bring us down to the water,

and remind us of the grace bestowed upon us in our baptisms.

Wash us clean as we confess our sins silently.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon (included in video)

Friends, hear and read the Good News! In the waters of baptism that flow all around us, we find God's grace-God's unrelenting and never ending grace. Friends let us come out of the water and rejoice! We are a forgiven people! Amen.

Scripture - Acts 8:26-40 (included in video)

An angel from the Lord spoke to Philip, "At noon, take the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) So he did. Meanwhile, an Ethiopian man was on his way home from Jerusalem, where he had come to worship. He was a eunuch and an official responsible for the entire treasury of Candace. (Candace is the title given to the Ethiopian queen.) He was reading the prophet Isaiah while sitting in his carriage. The Spirit told Philip, "Approach this carriage and stay with it." Running up to the carriage, Philip heard the man reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you really understand what you are reading?" The man replied, "Without someone to guide me, how could I?" Then he invited Philip to climb up and sit with him. This was the passage of scripture he was reading:

*Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent
so he didn't open his mouth.*

In his humiliation justice was taken away from him.

*Who can tell the story of his descendants
because his life was taken from the earth?*

The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, about whom does the prophet say this? Is he talking about himself or someone else?” Starting with that passage, Philip proclaimed the good news about Jesus to him. As they went down the road, they came to some water.

The eunuch said, “Look! Water! What would keep me from being baptized?” He ordered that the carriage halt. Both Philip and the eunuch went down to the water, where Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Lord’s Spirit suddenly took Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing.

Questions for Reflection

1. What do you think caused Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch to meet? Was it chance or something else?
2. Imagine you were in the desert and you see the water. What did it feel like to feel that water wash over your head? Does this reveal something to us about God and how God works in baptism?
3. When the eunuch comes out of the water, Philip is gone. What was it like to come out of the water alone? Despite the fact that Philip left, the eunuch goes on his way rejoicing. What was he rejoicing in?
4. Close your eyes for a moment. Take a deep breath. What is something that brings you joy in your life?

Prayers of the People and Lord’s Prayer

God around us, you find us wherever we are, even walking along a dry and dusty desert road. The Spirit that brought Philip and the eunuch together and sent the eunuch on his way rejoicing still flows abundantly in the world today. Spirit, hear our prayers:

For the Church, continue to mold us and shape us into the church that shows your love and your compassion to the world. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

For the Creation you made, heal the earth and draw us into the beauty of the world you made as we breathe in fresh air, hear birds chirping, and see the sun rising once more. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

For Neighbors who are carrying burdens and fears that are much too heavy for one person to bear, extend a hand of relief. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

For government and world leaders making unthinkable decisions, guide them with your wisdom. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those who risk their lives serving in militaries for freedoms they believe in, give them courage. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

For friends who are isolated, alone, and afraid, be a place of comfort and friendship. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

For your children overcome with grief and sadness, be a comfort. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

For the world filled with questions, uncertainty, and frustration, open our eyes to the joy only You can bring. **O Lord, hear our prayer.**

God we give you these prayers trusting in your Spirit that flows in the world as we say together the prayer your son taught us, praying:

*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.*

Joy

A Reflection by Kate Buckley

When I think of “joy,” I think of something that cannot be contained. It comes as a byproduct of restoration and healing. Like in Psalm 23, after we have been led by quiet waters and our soul is again whole, our cup overflows. With what? I think joy.

In my imagination, joy has all these atoms swirling around really fast. Sparking the next one, jiving together to produce something from nothing. The energy is like a little combustion. An explosion of some force or in the scriptures, Good News, that outgrows its environment. It flows out and over its container, out of the top, down the sides. If there were seals on the top, it would likely form holes and come out in an arbitrary, but magnificent pattern of rays shooting



off in different directions. It is that determined to make it out into the light, into the world, to be shared.

Is joy loud, I wonder? It very often is. It's all that energy swirling around, that lovely cacophony of particles that can't help but cry out. In song, in shouts, in gladness and thanksgiving. The Scriptures often show joy and rejoicing being expressed in song.

But I think joy can be soft, too. It's a muted swirling of quiet mirth. A steady, balanced, but equally radiant supply of gratitude and wholeness that can't help but to escape. Less like an explosion, but more like a tiny but persistent stream of love and contentment emanating out from the crevices of its carrier.

In Acts Chapter 8, the eunuch and Philip have an encounter. Philip trusts the guiding of the spirit to engage in conversation with him, and the eunuch is receptive and open to the good news, inviting Philip into his carriage and insisting upon baptism along the side of the road. The eunuch leaves rejoicing.



There's rejoicing in the gospel over found coins, found sheep, found sons. Here is the tough bit about joy: what was not lost, can never be found. Joy's predecessor is grief, pain, heartache. A hole in a soul. A missing piece, an empty void, a wandering in the wilderness. But boy is there joy in the finding! The wholeness that comes from the good news of Jesus Christ that completes us is worth every second of the winding road. Every bruise and scrape, every tear.



Jesus himself suffered holes in his hands, loneliness in his heart, cries from the cross for anguish to be removed. In the night there is weeping. But joy comes in the morning. Dark is dark because light will emerge, glowing and life-giving. Where before there was a hole,

an abyss, that same hole has become a fountain. Gushing like a geyser. The

source is still that deep dark little hole, the one that used to own your soul but has now become a gateway for gratitude, an entrance into others' humanity. And you get to be a carrier. Even if it shows up only in glimpses... soak up the times when your completeness mandates sharing: Joy.

