



We begin our 10 days of prayer in worship together as a synod on Reformation Sunday, October 25, 2020.

You can watch the online worship service at: <http://metrodcelca.org/reformation2020/>

The service is being hosted by the Virginia conference and highlights the transformational power of the gospel that calls us into the mission field beyond our walls.





When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Matthew 25:31-40 NRSV

Reflection by Deacon Dave Larrabee

Standing by Chris' side as the Priest gave him his last rights, I was taken back to the way he wrestled with his faith at the Lamb Center Bible Study table, trying to reconcile Holy Scripture with his love of science. I thought he might have some questions about the Priest's words. Chris had been ravaged by his struggle with addiction and the strain of homelessness. A few weeks later at his memorial service, a guest shared about the time Chris and other friends were walking into the grocery store to purchase "supplies." After passing a woman at the entrance asking for money for food, Chris had mercy on her and told his companions "we need to help this woman." "What?" was their response. "We are homeless and we should help her?" As they left, Chris gave her a little something to help her out. Come; enter into Your Father's joy.

Silence for Meditation

Questions to Ponder

- "Judgement" seems to have more to do with mercy than works in this parable. How might this guide us as we live out our baptism?
- In this parable, living in mercy took those on the right to the place of God's suffering in the world. Has living in mercy taken you to the cross in human lives?
- What relationship exists between God's suffering in the world and the choices we might make when we vote?

Prayer

God of Mercy, instill in us Your hunger and thirst for righteousness. You invite us into the joyful journey of merciful living. Grow in us your compassion for those without food to eat, water to quench their thirst, those who are rejected and abandoned, those who are without clothing and medical care, and those who are victims of systemic racism and mass incarceration.

God of Justice, guide our leaders at all levels of government to seek justice for those who are oppressed and to love mercy for those who are unjustly accused, suffering from mental illness or carrying the burden of unimaginable trauma. Guide them in enacting policies that address world hunger, clean water and a healthy environment, homelessness and poverty, health care and racial unrest.

God of Discernment, during this period of global pandemic, protect all those exercising their civic duty of voting. Grant us wisdom in voting for leaders who will see Your image in the face of those who are hungry and thirsty, those who are strangers or lack daily necessities, those without health care and those who are incarcerated.

We pray all this in the name of your Son, Christ Jesus, Amen.



But God, rich in mercy and loving us so much, brought us to life in Christ, even when we were dead in our sins. It is through this grace that we have been saved.

Ephesians 2:4-5

Reflection by Pastor Ben Hogue

I often ponder the words 'get to' and 'have to' with my Confirmation students, especially when it comes to the idea of grace. I ask, "You have been given this incredible gift. You don't have to do anything with it, but you get to. So, what are you going to do with it?" Usually blank stares. But recently one student sheepishly looked up and said, "Live?" "Yes! LIVE!" I shrieked! My excitement seemed to have shocked the class. Just as God has called us into relationship, God sends us out to live as forgiven, beloved, grace-fueled sinners/saints. Even now. Even during a global pandemic. Even amid hurt and suffering. Even among the division and noise of this political season. How do we live in this moment?

Rev. Howard Thurman once said, "Don't ask what the world needs, ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs are people who have come alive." The world needs you, especially you and especially right now, to come alive! The world needs you to be fueled by what the Spirit has placed on your heart, to be propelled by the fires of justice and mercy, and live — sustained by the love of God through Jesus Christ. After all, what did Jesus tell us? That he came so that we may have life...and not just have life, have it abundantly! (John 10:10b) So let us continue our journey, yes, toward election day but especially together as forgiven and beloved children of God living life abundant!

Questions to Ponder

- Following the advice of Rev. Thurman, what makes you come alive? And what are you doing about it?
- What do you feel the world needs you to come alive for? How will that be embodied during these final days in the election season?
- Today, what is one thing you can do to live in response to God's grace that saves?

Let us pray:

Merciful and loving God, you bring us to life in Christ, even when we are dead in our sins. We come to you alive with hearts that are stirring and souls that are aching. Be with us this day as we live in response to the grace you have given, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the show of your wings.

Psalm 17:8

Reflection by Pastor Karen Brau

When the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, the congregation I serve, Luther Place, began offering a Compline service on Facebook live, 4 times per week at 9 pm. Then the pandemic of ongoing police brutality and systemic racism towards black bodies was illuminated as we watched George Floyd die while pinned on the ground by a police officer, while others looked on. The pandemics rage on and on, and we have prayed Compline for over 30 weeks. Night after night one of the lines we chant is a pleading to God, Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings. Repeating this line over and over helps us to remember God's presence in, with and among our neighbors who are suffering and dying in our uncertain days. And each night when I close out the time of prayer, I remind the gathered, You are beloved by God. May we all receive this grace.

Questions to Ponder

- Does God “keeping us,” and “hiding us,” make a difference in how we practice “neighbor love,” particularly towards our most vulnerable neighbors?
- At what points does your “neighbor love,” intersect with your civic responsibility and engagement in democracy?



But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your servant; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Matthew 20:25-28

Reflection by Pastor Tom Knoll

It is my belief that it is not only our civil duty but also our Christian responsibility to vote. The big question is who do we vote for? Chances are many of you reading this have already voted. With the energy around early voting and a scary pandemic lurking, November 3rd may be the largest non-election, election day ever. As a disciple of Jesus, I feel the candidate(s) I vote for should be a person who has demonstrated that their leadership is not to serve themselves or some special interest, but to serve others. God had placed you and me on this earth for a purpose and that purpose is to serve others, not ourselves. It's really a simple philosophy but difficult to practice within the consumeristic culture we live in. The scripture from Matthew below speaks for itself. As Jesus has come to serve, so we have been called to serve.

Questions to Ponder

- Imagine what our communities could be if our greatest concern and attention was to serve others.
- If you tried to model servant behavior in your life, what would it look like?
- How can the church turn around our society's infatuation with individualism?

Time for Silent Reflection

Prayer

O God, you call us to honor those in authority. Help us to elect trustworthy leaders, participate in wise decisions in our common life together, and to above all serve our neighbors. Bless the elected and non-elected leaders of our communities and may they above all be servants to those they serve. Amen.



With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD
be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I
give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but
to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:6-8

Reflection by Pastor Ray Ranker

As a high schooler I interned for my local county council member. It was a great experience for me, and all these years later I only remember one specific topic that we talked about: his desire to begin each council session with a public prayer. He was a Christian, and his proposal was controversial; several council members were vociferously against it. I remember thinking that, as prayer was/is important to me, I applauded him for this 'fight for public prayer'. Looking back now, I'm not so sure. On the one hand, yes, prayer continues to be essential for me and roots me (and us) to God, the Church and one another. On the other hand, wouldn't the time and energy that he put into lobbying for this proposed change have been better spent on doing justice?

Questions to Ponder

- What are the things that matter most to God?
- Where are the places where I prefer public displays of religion to the hard work of digging into the tough issues around justice work?
- Does it always need to be an either/or? How can I both walk humbly with God in a public way, while also working towards justice and offering loving mercy?

Silence for Reflection

Prayer

Dear God, you love me even though I have faults. And you love others, including political opponents, even though they have faults. Help me in my walk to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you oh God. Help me to lift up the marginalized of society in both my prayers and in my actions.
Amen.



Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Reflection by Pastor Kari Parsons

Many years ago, I was taught a sung meditation that has helped to ground and calm me in times of fear or uncertainty. Its words are, “Changeless and calm, deep mystery, ever more deeply rooted in Thee.” For me, this is a reminder that our God is eternal. As the book of Revelation reminds us, God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, what was, and what is, and what is to come. What remains constant for the faithful throughout history and throughout the whole of scripture is God’s steadfast love, faithfulness, and mercy. As we study the scriptures, as we pray the psalms and sing hymns, God invites us to sink our own roots into that steadfastness, to let God’s love ground and stabilize us. Then, when the uncertainties of a troubled election season, or a pandemic, or both at the same time, trouble us, our roots remain firm.

Questions to Ponder

- Is there a Bible verse, story, or hymn that reminds you of God’s presence with you in times of trouble? Read or sing it again. Perhaps you could post it somewhere you’ll see it each day.
- When uncertainty and anxiety blow your thoughts like strong winds, could you stop for a moment and “be still and know that God is,” as Psalm 46 commands?

Silence for Reflection

Prayer

O God of grace and mercy, root our lives in your goodness and steadfast love. Teach us to trust in you and follow the example of your Word, Jesus Christ, especially when the winds of change and anxiety seem most fierce. Help us to know your Spirit’s presence with us, guiding us toward your truth, your justice, your compassion, and your grace. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



DAY 8 // NOVEMBER 1

All are invited to an online All Saints Service on November 1, 2020 at 4:00 PM to remember all those who have died in the past year, which is especially important as we grieve for those we have lost through the COVID-19 pandemic.

You are welcome to participate in this service through the Synod's Youtube page, Facebook page or on the Synod website at metrocelca.org/allsaints2020

To prepare for worship, please have a small bowl of water available and light as many candles as you would like.

**Prayer**

Merciful God, give us hearts and minds focused on nurturing all that you have made. Forgive us when we are unjust or accept unjust behavior in our leaders. Remind us of your call to not withdraw from the world, but to be in the world as your very own broken and beloved people. Strengthen us to confess and confront the sins that continue to enslave us to the powers of this world and ignite in us a passion for the justice and welfare of those who are oppressed, ignored, and vulnerable. Empower us to lead with a love for humanity that reflects your love revealed in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.



Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;
beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
“To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live.
O simple ones, learn prudence; acquire intelligence, you who lack it.
Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right;
for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.
They are all straight to one who understands and right to those who find knowledge.”

Proverbs 8:1-9 (NRSV)

Reflection by Pastor Angela Shannon

“The Call of Wisdom”

Instead of singing *Auld Lang Syne* to welcome in 2020, perhaps a better song choice would have been Sweet Honey in the Rock’s, “Can’t no one know at sunrise, how the day is going to end.” Who could have predicted a global pandemic? COVID-19 has taken the lives of at least 220,000 people as of this writing. It has exposed the pernicious nature of the “isms” that many of us live with and strain against on the daily. This pandemic has coaxed racial animus out of hiding. Climate change has precipitated catastrophic weather events at an alarming rate. The political climate is odious. It has created chasms of divisiveness that feel too wide to cross. Added to this mix, are our personal fears, pains and griefs.

Who, Lord, can stand? How can we find our equilibrium in the midst of so much? Me? I spend lots of time in walking meditations. Every step is a prayer. I fill my lungs with breath of life and exhale slowly. Deep breathing reminds me of the breath of God. The Holy Spirit reminds me that Christ is our center. My brain is bathed in oxygen which positions me to RSVP Holy Wisdom’s gracious invitation. I listen, as I have been taught as a Benedictine oblate, with the ear of my heart. Wisdom comes bearing gifts of presence, stillness, discernment and more. Holy Wisdom is still calling to us. Let us listen and attend.

Silence for Meditation

Questions to Ponder

- How will you listen for Holy Wisdom’s gracious invitation above the din and noise of the upcoming election?
- Wisdom has invited us and gifts us with good things. What do you need from Wisdom for the days ahead?

Prayer

Holy God, gracious creator of all there is, help us hear and receive your Holy Wisdom for the living of these days. Please help us to trust in your mercy and abiding presence. For the sake of your Son, our sibling and savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.



...you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 22:38

Reflection by Brother Ken Taylor

Do we really love our neighbors?

We have entered into a critical time in our nation's history. Multiple overlapping crises have overwhelmed, paralyzed, and distressed our nation. Dire predictions by trusted epidemiologists have been ignored as the Covid virus mitigation strategies have become deeply politicized. During this global pandemic the wealth gap has increased as the stock market makes billions for a handful of millionaires, whilst millions of families now taste a level of poverty and uncertainty not seen in our generation. Friends and families are divided, the truth camouflaged, and faith defined by partisan politics rather than politics being defined by an Agape 'God-and-neighbor-loving' faith. Our deep prayer is that the Agape love of God will guide the hearts and votes of our nation, as we trust that through our beloved system of representational democracy, God will carry us into a just and merciful future for all of our neighbors.

Silence for Meditation

Questions to Ponder

- When I reflect on the time in which we live, am I truly loving God with an Agape love? Or, is my love for God based upon my own comforts and whims?
- As I consider this year's national and local elections, am I truly concerned for that which is loving for all of my neighbors? Or am I mostly concerned for my own welfare?
- How will I love my neighbor who votes differently than I do? Can I still show the 'love-of-God' for those who I perceive are not concerned about my welfare or the welfare of our neighbors?
- What is the 'love-of-God' thing for me to do if the election does not go my way? Can I still trust that God is leading me and lovingly supporting me?

Prayer

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Evening Prayer, ELW)