

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Spirit, Community, Action – Inside & “Out”

Celebrating 42 Years

Easter V May 7, 2023

There is a book at the Sanctuary entry where prayer requests may be entered. There is also a Square device at the entry of the Sanctuary if you would like to make your Offering Donation via credit card.

Like Life, The Order of Worship is Subject to Change

Gathering Music

Jorge Martinez

Welcome & Announcements

Rev. Emma Chattin

Centering

At the sound of the singing bowl,
please take a few moments to prepare yourself for our worship together

Gathering Words ~ *adapted from Hafez*

One: Cloak yourself in a thousand ways; still I shall know you, my Beloved.

**Many: *Veil yourself with every enchantment and yet I shall still find you,
Presence most dear, close and intimate.***

One: I shall salute you in the springing of cypresses and in the sheen of lakes, the laughter of fountains.

Many: *I shall surely see you in tumbling clouds, in brightly embroidered meadows.*

One: O Beloved Presence, more beautiful than all the stars together,

**Many: *I trace your face in ivy that climbs, in clusters of grapes,
in morning flaming the mountains in the clear arch of sky.***

One: You gladden the whole earth and make every heart great.

Many: *You are the breath within us, you are the breathing of the world.*

Prayers of the Community

Dale Bradshaw

First Reading ~ *Acts 17:22-31*

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Citizens of Athens, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at your shrines, I even discovered among them an altar inscribed, ‘To the Unknown God.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Sovereign of heaven and earth, doesn’t live in shrines made by human hands, and isn’t served by humans, as if in need of anything. No! God is the one who gives everyone life, breath — everything. From one source (one blood) God created all of humankind to inhabit the entire earth, and set the time for each nation to exist and the exact place where each nation should dwell. God did this so that human beings would seek, feel, search for God, and perhaps find the One who is not really far from any one of us — the One in whom we live and move and have our being. As one of your own poets has put it, ‘We, too, are God’s children.’ If we are in fact children of God, then it’s inexcusable to think that the Deity is like an image of gold, silver or stone — an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. God, who overlooked such ignorance in the past, now commands all people everywhere to change their minds for the better and reform their lives. For a day has been set when the whole world will be judged with justice by one destined and appointed for that task. God has given proof of all of this by raising this judge from the dead.”

Second Reading

~ adapted from Barbara Brown Taylor in "An Alter in the World: A Geography of Faith"

If I had a dollar for every time I heard someone say, "I am spiritual but not religious," then I would be richer, but no wiser about what that phrase means. I hear it everywhere. People even say it to my face when they learn that I am a religion professor who spent years as a parish priest. In that context, people are usually trying to tell me that they have a sense of the Divine depths of things, but they are not churchgoers. They want to grow closer to God, but not at the cost of going to church.

I think I know what they mean by "religious." It is the "spiritual" part that is harder to grasp. My guess is they do not use that word in reference to a formal set of beliefs, since that belongs on the religion side of the page. It may be the name for a longing— a longing for more meaning, more feeling, more connection, more life- they know there is more to life than what meets the eye. They have drawn close to this "More" in nature, in love, in art, in grief, and they would be happy for someone to teach them how to spend more time in the presence of this deeper reality.

People seem willing to look all over the place for this treasure. The last place most people look is right under their feet, in the everyday activities, experiences, accidents, and encounters of their lives. What possible spiritual significance could a trip to the grocery store have? How could something as common as a photograph be a window to a new way of thinking? A simple story be a doorway to greater life? The accumulated insight of those wise about the spiritual life suggests that the reason so many of us cannot see the X that marks the spot is because we are already standing on it. Oddly enough, church may be the very place to help to point that out.

Song of Response Bring Many Names No. 11

Reflection Why Church?
Looking For God Rev. Emma Chattin

Community Dialogue

Offering Invitation

Offertory We Are An Offering MCC NoVA Choir
by Dwight Liles

✠ Welcome To The Table! ✠

Rev. Emma Chattin

Invitation To The Table

Consecration & Words of Institution

Sharing The Open Meal of Christ

Community Blessing ~ Kurt Jaeger

Closing Song Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise No. 1

Benediction & Sending Forth Rev. Emma Chattin

Postlude

✠ Go in Peace ✠