

# METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

September 10, 2023

*Spirit, Community, Action – Inside & “Out”  
Celebrating 42 Years of Pride*

*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*

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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

Illumination

Tee

Gathering Words ~ *adapted from Mark L. Belletini and John W. Bingham*

Genevieve

One: Go your ways in peace, live simply, gently, at home in yourselves.

**Many: Act justly. Speak justly. Be kind.**

One: Remember the depth of your compassion.

**Many: Forget not your power in the days of your powerlessness.**

One: Do not desire to be wealthier than your peers,

**Many: And stint not the hand of charity.**

One: Speak the truth, or speak not.

**Many: Do not form enemies from differences,  
and crave peace for all people in the world.**

One: Go your ways knowing not the answers to all things,

**Many: Yet seeking always the answer to one more thing than you know.**

Prayers of the Community

Dale Bradshaw

First Reading ~ *Numbers 22:21-32*

Leigh Anne Arnold

The next morning Balaam got up, saddled his donkey, and left with the delegation for Moab. But God was very angry because Balaam was going, and God's angel stood in the middle of the road to bar the way. Balaam was riding on the donkey with two assistants accompanying him, one on either side. When the donkey saw the angel of YHWH standing in the road holding a sword, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam started beating the donkey to get her to go back onto the road. But the angel of God stood on that narrow path, which was between two vineyards with walls on each side. When the donkey saw the angel of God, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So Balaam beat the donkey again. Then the angel of God moved on ahead and stood in a space narrower yet, where there was no room to turn right or left. When the donkey saw the angel of God, she laid down under Balaam. This enraged Balaam, and he started beating the donkey severely. Then God opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, to make you beat me three times?" Balaam answered the donkey, "You

made a fool out of me! Why, if I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you this instant!" But she said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden to this very day? Have I ever acted this way?" "No," Balaam replied. Then YHWH opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of God standing in the road with a drawn sword. And Balaam bowed low and prostrated himself before the angel. The angel of God asked, "Why did you beat your donkey three times? I came here to bar your way, for your path is a reckless one before me! Three times your donkey saw me, and three times she turned away. In fact, if she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now—though, I would have spared her!"

## Second Reading ~ *adapted from Father Richard Rohr in “Let God Be God”*

It takes a long time for us to allow God to be who God really is. Our natural egocentricity wants to make God into who we want God to be. Yet if God is always Mystery, then God is always in some way the unfamiliar, beyond what we're used to, beyond our comfort zone, beyond what we can explain or understand. In the fourth century, St. Augustine said, "If you comprehend it, then it is not God." And yet, very often we want a God who reflects and even confirms our culture, our biases, our economic, and political systems and beliefs.

The First Commandment says that we're not supposed to make any graven images of God or worship them. At first glance, we may think this means only handmade likenesses of God. But it mostly refers to rigid images of God that we hold in our heads. The human ego wants to keep things firmly in its grasp; so, we've created a God who fits into our small systems and our understanding of God. Thus, we've produced a God who requires expensive churches and robes, a God who likes to go to war just as much as we do, and a domineering God because we like to dominate. We've almost completely forgotten and ignored what Jesus revealed about the nature of the God the he knew. If Jesus is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15) then God is nothing like we expected.

**Song of Response      Hush, Somebody's Calling My Name      No. 604**

## Community Dialogue

## >Welcome To The Table!

Rev. Emma Chattin

## Invitation To The Table

## Consecration & Words of Institution

## Sharing The Open Meal of Christ

## Time of Individual Prayer and Blessing

## Community Blessing ~ Kurt Jaeger

**Closing Song      All Things Bright and Beautiful      No. 31**

## Benediction and Sending Forth

## Postlude

❧ Go in Peace ❧