

***The First Church of Christ in Marblehead
Old North Church, United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation***

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

September 13, 2020 Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost

GATHERING

WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Dennis Calhoun

CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Dr. Dennis Calhoun

Come, let us praise the God of mercy.
Let us glorify the God of grace.
For to do wrong is human.
But to show forgiveness is the way of God.
Come. let us worship the Lord our God

HYMN

Shall We Gather At the River

S 17

(Verses 1, 3 &4)

Stephanie Scarcella, mezzo-soprano; Holly Cameron, harmony; Maria vanKalken, piano

CENTERING

PRAYER OF INVOCATION AND CONFESSION

Rev. Lindsay Popperson

Compassionate-One, Lover-of-Goodness, Patience-with-Sinners,
Draw near to us.

In a world that seems full of only bad news,
Surround us with confidence in your good news:
that you love us as parents love their children;
that your mercy is boundless and generous,
that you beckon us always and will wait forever
as we find our way back to you.

Open our hearts to receive your compassion;
And then show us how to forgive,
So that we may be vessels of resurrection hope in our troubled world

SILENT PRAYER

Jesus drew near to the downtrodden and the weary, and guided them in the ways that bring hope. We pray now as he taught us, saying:

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 and ever. Amen.

One: Church, in the scriptures, “Seven” is often seen as a perfect number,
a mystical number, a number that points to infinity.
So when Jesus tells his disciples to forgive “seventy times seven”,
(or “seventy-seven times” depending on translation),
he is inviting people into a never ending, expansive dance of grace.

Confession, repentance, turning one’s life around to a transformed future;
Forgiveness, resilience, opening one’s life to a new moment in relationship:
all this may seem impossible, and yet Jesus calls us to profound,
ever-evolving change.

Let’s take a few moments to ponder our lives,
personal, and in wider community.
Where do we need forgiveness? Where do we need to forgive?

Where do our lives intersect in the wider community
with structures, practices, attitudes that deeply hurt our neighbors?
Where must we seek forgiveness?
Where must we seek to effect change?

How have we been wounded with structures, practices, attitudes
of the wider community that need transformation?
How may we begin to forgive?

SILENT PRAYER

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

Rev. Lindsay Popperson

One: Holy One,
You call us into this ever expanding dance of grace;
Turning “seventy times seven” is not too much when we follow your lead
into a future of hope and peace.
Glory be to the One who, working in us,
can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Amen.

LISTENING

A MOMENT WITH OUR CHILDREN

Karen Kilty

HYMN

The King of Love My Shepherd Is
Holly Cameron, soprano; Maria vanKalken, piano

#87

FIRST READING

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.’

‘For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii;* and seizing him by the throat, he said, “Pay what you owe.” Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you.” But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, “You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?” And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister*from your heart.’

SECOND READING

“Forgiveness”

John Greenleaf Whittier

My heart was heavy, for its trust had been
Abused, its kindness answered with foul wrong;
So, turning gloomily from my fellow-men,
One summer Sabbath day I strolled among
The green mounds of the village burial-place;
Where, pondering how all human love and hate
Find one sad level; and how, soon or late,
Wronged and wrongdoer, each with meekened face,
And cold hands folded over a still heart,
Pass the green threshold of our common grave,
Whither all footsteps tend, whence none depart,
Awed for myself, and pitying my race,
Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,
Swept all my pride away, and trembling I forgave

SERMON

“Forgive Us...As We Forgive...”

Rev. Dr. Dennis Calhoun

PASTORAL PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Dennis Calhoun

RESPONDING

OFFERTORY MOMENT

Rev. Lindsay Popperson

DOXOLOGY (#45)

Praise God for love we all may share.

Praise God for beauty everywhere.

Praise God for hope of good to be.

Praise God for truth that makes us free. Amen.

SENDING

HYMN

Praise, My Soul, the God of Heaven (Verses 2,4 & 5)

#19

Maria vanKalken, organ

BENEDICTION

Rev. Dr. Dennis Calhoun