

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

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

July 12, 2020

Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

GATHERING

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Dr. Dennis Calhoun

CENTERING

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Rev. Lindsay Popperson

O God, distant yet near, we gather as witnesses to your promise that if we seek you with all our hearts, we will find you. Be among us this day. Hear the confessions of our mouths and the yearnings of our hearts. Help us to change the narrowness of our imagination and the pettiness of our living. Make us new again with your holy grace. Help us to know and to respond to your loving presence in our lives.

We join our voices with people throughout centuries and around the world, praying as Jesus taught us:

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.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Rev. Lindsay Popperson

Almighty and merciful God, you created and are creating still.

In your presence our limits lie stark before us.

We confess our unclean lips, our cold hearts, our turning away from neighbors, our broken promises, our unrepentant hours.

Forgive us, O Holy One.

We confess that we have squandered the gifts you have given. We have neglected the land.

We have grasped for goods. We have used each other.

We have loved power more than people.

Forgive us, O Holy One.

Cleanse us from the illusion of innocence.

Come into our hearts, and make us new again.

We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

SILENT PRAYER

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GRACE

Rev. Lindsay Popperson

Be sure of this, people of God:

God knows us fully, and receives us just as we are,
and God loves us enough not to leave us as we are.

We are being transformed. Alleluia, amen!

LISTENING

HYMN

Fairest Lord Jesus
Maria vanKalken, piano

#109

MOMENTS WITH CHILDREN

Karen Kilty, Director of Children's Ministries

FIRST READING

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Read by Diane Thomas

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears*listen!'

'Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.* As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'

SECOND READING

"Good Ground"

Read by John Meakin

By Matthew Guite

(Used with permission of the poet. <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com>)

I love your simple story of the sower,
With all its close attention to the soil,
Its movement from the knowledge to the knower,
Its take on the tenacity of toil.

I feel the fall of seed a sower scatters,
So equally available to all,
Your story takes me straight to all that matters,
Yet understands the reasons why I fall.

Oh deepen me where I am thin and shallow,
Uproot in me the thistle and the thorn,
Keep far from me that swiftly snatching shadow,
That seizes on your seed to mock and scorn.

O break me open, Jesus, set me free,
Then find and keep your own good ground in me.

SERMON AND PASTORAL PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Dennis Calhoun

RESPONDING

OFFERTORY MOMENT

Rev. Lindsay Popperson

Your gifts have been offered to this church, not in plates passed through pews, but in envelopes sent to the office and in direct deposits from your accounts. Your gifts have been offered to this church in every phone call made, every prayer offered, every meeting faithfully attended.

Every gift is holy, is precious, is needed and gratefully received. We dedicate them all now to God. Let us pray.

PRAAYER OF DEDICATION

What we offer may not seem significant in a world of so much deep need, Caring God, but we pray they may become seeds of hope, of grace, of change, of life to all those around us. We pray this in the name of Jesus, the one who offered himself for love's sake. Amen.

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

If You Will Trust in God to Guide You
Maria vanKalken, organ

#94

BENEDICTION

Rev. Dr. Dennis Calhoun