

This June 14th...the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost, 2020  
On behalf of our family of faith here at Community United Church of Christ in Medford, WI,  
welcome to this time of Worship! I am Pastor Mary Jo Laabs.

It is our mission here to serve, to pray, to love, and to hold true to these words:  
“No matter who you are or where you are on your life’s journey, you are welcome here.”

This is Father’s Day. As we think of those men who raised us, have lost, adopted, loved, nurtured and taught, who care for and shelter, foster and befriend children. God’s blessings to all of us who will talk with, visit or give virtual hugs to their Fathers and those who hold their Fathers in their hearts today. Happy Father’s Day!

Today, we will be celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Take a minute now to get a piece of bread or a muffin or a cookie; some small cups of juice -- perhaps grape or cranberry -- or wine, with or without alcohol. Set these things on the table in front of you. Place a mask and a glove on your table, symbolically, as well. Perhaps you want to light a candle or place a flower or the photograph of someone you wish to bring into the circle of faith beside the bread and the cup. Have these things ready.

If you are listening online, take a few moments to *watch* this video,  
“You Can Do This Hard Thing” posted and written by Carrie newcomer.

<https://www.facebook.com/CarrieNewcomer/videos/3263304413732292/UzpfSTUyNzczNDQ1NDoxMDE1ODU0MjkyMDQ0OTQ1NQ/>

Or, read these words: There at the table in your living space:

With my head in my hands. A column of numbers I just could not understand. You said "Add these together, Carry the two, Now you." You can do this hard thing. You can do this hard thing. Its not easy I know, But I believe that its so. You can do this hard thing. At a cold winter station Breathing into our gloves. This would change me forever Leaving for God knows what.  
You carried my bags, You said "I'll wait For you." You can do this hard thing. You can do this hard thing. Its not easy I know, But I believe that its so. You can do this hard thing.  
Late at night I called, And you answered the phone. The worst it had happened, And I did not want to be alone. You quietly listened, You said "We'll see this thru."  
You can do this hard thing. You can do this hard thing. Its not easy I know, But I believe that its so. You can do this hard thing. Here we stand breathless And pressed in hard times. Hearts hung like laundry On backyard clothes lines. Impossible just takes A little more time. From the muddy ground Comes a green volunteer. In a place we thought Barren New life appears. Morning will come whistling Some comforting tune, For you. You can do this hard thing. You can do this hard thing. Its not easy I know, But I believe that its so. You can do this hard thing.

Source: Musixmatch Songwriters: Carrie Ann Newcomer You Can Do This Hard Thing Lyrics © Carrie Newcomer Music

**The title of my message today is:** “*We Can Do It!*”

Pray with me: Holy One, we yearn to travel during these days of summer...our memories are filled, now, more than ever, with past summers...trips to the lake, to the city pool, to class reunions, to 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations and concerts in the park, to camping in the State Forest and trips to the County Fairs. You place before us in these “to distance or not to distance” days, moments to looks at ourselves and one another and how we all fit into the span of our life’s journey. Our travels are shorter now...we take less with us. We come, carrying our faith in our hearts; holding out our hands that are filled only with time and our minds that are filled with news, choices, fears, concerns. We can almost hear the summer greening and blooming.

You know very well how we feel, O God; what we have been doing and what we have left behind. Only you know what lies ahead. Please, let us be safe. Please let us never forget that we are all equal in your sight. Enable us to change wat we can. Let good come about because of what we say and do. Help us do these hard things. We pray in the name of Jesus, who always shows us the way. Amen.

God is not testing us. God is showing us the path to new life! God is not punishing us.

**God is** giving us a chance to change our foolish ways, to hold our raw tongues, to see through the lens of compassion! **God is** telling us to live life in this new way. **God is** nudging us and whispering in our ears, “You can do these hard things! I am with you!”

Take a deep breath, and let it out now, like a punctured balloon.

Although our mouths may be masked, let the smiles of our eyes  
be more contagious than any virus floating by!

We, like the apostles...have been given a new assignment in our journey of life. Our new calling is to do the right thing, while loving one another. And even so, we choose what **we think** is right and quickly learn it might not have been such a good choice. We ignore that “calling voice” inside sit and wait for *normal* to return.

In the words of the Gospel today, Jesus tells his disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest. Is Jesus calling the disciples to pray for *themselves*? Is Jesus calling us to pray for ourselves? This is the “**pray for vocations**” scripture that some of us were taught was intended only for those who were going into the seminary or away to the convent. The truth is that the scripture passage that I am about to read is story of Jesus commissioning the 12 apostles to go and to cast out the demons, cure the diseases, raise the dead and proclaim the good news. Picture yourself there listening to Jesus speak. How is he speaking to us as this very moment?

**Today’s Scripture is taken from the Gospel of Matthew 9:35-10:20 , *The Message interpretation:***

**Chapter 9:**<sup>35-38</sup> Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. “What a huge harvest!” he said to his disciples. “How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!”

**And from Chapter 10, we hear this: *The Twelve Harvest Hands***

<sup>1-4</sup> The prayer was no sooner prayed than it was answered. Jesus called twelve of his followers and sent them into the ripe fields. He gave them power to kick out the evil spirits and to tenderly care for the bruised and hurt lives. This is the list of the twelve he sent: Simon (they called him Peter, or “Rock”), Andrew, his brother, James, Zebedee’s son, John, his brother, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, the tax man, James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon, the Canaanite, Judas Iscariot (who later turned on him).

<sup>5-8</sup> Jesus sent his twelve harvest hands out with this charge: “Don’t begin by traveling to some far-off place to convert unbelievers. And don’t try to be dramatic by tackling some public enemy. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously.

<sup>9-10</sup> “Don’t think you have to put on a fund-raising campaign before you start. You don’t need a lot of equipment. You are the equipment, and all you need to keep that going is three meals a day. Travel light.

<sup>11</sup> “When you enter a town or village, don’t insist on staying in a luxury inn. Get a modest place with some modest people and be content there until you leave.

<sup>12-15</sup> “When you knock on a door, be courteous in your greeting. If they welcome you, be gentle in your conversation. If they don’t welcome you, quietly withdraw. Don’t make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and be on your way. You can be sure that on Judgment Day they’ll be mighty sorry—but it’s no concern of yours now.

<sup>16</sup> “Stay alert. This is hazardous work I’m assigning you. You’re going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don’t call attention to yourselves. Be as cunning as a snake, inoffensive as a dove.

<sup>17-20</sup> “Don’t be naive. Some people will impugn your motives, others will smear your reputation—just because you believe in me. Don’t be upset when they haul you before the civil authorities. Without knowing it, they’ve done you—and me—a favor, given you a platform for preaching the kingdom news!

And don’t worry about what you’ll say or how you’ll say it. The right words will be there; the Spirit of your Father will supply the words.

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The Apostles who have, up until now, been following Jesus, listening to him, watching him; who have been learning how best to love one another, to be compassionate and just; who probably are thinking that they “get it” now...these 12, this day, without warning, are sent out. Jesus looks at them and says, “Go now.” ...but don’t go among the Gentiles, nor to towns of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go to the lost sheep ...

<sup>7</sup> As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’<sup>8</sup> Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers,<sup>9</sup> cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

<sup>9</sup> Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, <sup>10</sup> no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff...(NRSV)

Wait... What!!!? No pay? No belongings? Begging for food?? Door to door??

Is there any little part of those commands that you would agree to do? Would you be pleading, “Please, send someone else, Lord.” Would Jesus accept that answer? What did you hear? What words stood out?

Jesus said that the “Spirit of your Father will supply the words.” **You can do this hard thing!**

Carl A. Boyle, a sales representative, was driving home when he saw a group of young children selling Kool-Aid on a corner in his neighborhood. They had posted the typical hand scrawled sign over their stand: "Kool-Aid, 10 cents." Carl was intrigued. He pulled over to the curb. A young man approached and asked if he would like strawberry or grape Kool-Aid. Carl placed his order and handed the boy a quarter. After much deliberation, the children determined he had some change coming and rifled through the cigar box until they finally came up with the correct amount. The boy returned with the change, then stood by the side of the car. He asked if Carl was finished drinking. "Just about," said Carl. "Why?" "Well, that's the only cup we have," answered the boy, "and we need it to stay in business."

It's difficult to operate a Kool-Aid business if you only have one cup. We make that same mistake, too.

Our minds are stuck in one way of thinking. We have become accustomed to doing hard things even before the coronavirus blew in. So, today, think of one thing that we could do better. Just you, right where you are. Think about it now. Take a deep breath. Breathe in courage. Now breath out your fears.

Know that you can do that one thing.

Think now of one thing that we can do better as a church family. Just us, outside of our brick-walled church building. Think about it now. Take a deep breath. Breathe in hope. Now breath out your despair.

Look around. Jesus is holding up the “Help Wanted” sign...maybe it’s the Kool-Aid sign!

Know that we can do this hard thing.

The medical community says that the virus is dangerous and unpredictable and it is here. The sick ones are not just the ones in the hospital, they could be among us, looking just as healthy as we are. The precautions that we would have to take, still would not assure us that we would be safe gathering together inside of our church building. We can do this hard thing...this being apart, yet being together in heart.

Knowing that we have been sent to proclaim the good news while still yearning for something better, we might find ourselves crying and screaming, “There IS nothing better!” but, we can do this hard thing that we are doing because God is up to something much “**better**,” that we haven’t yet imagined. Yes. We can do it. Amen.

(Ask Alexa to play meditative music.)

**Pray with me:** Let us turn our hearts to prayer.... **Take a deep breath. Let it out.**

Let us pray: **Pray with me:** Let's begin our time of prayer with a little bit of silence.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Let us confess our sin before God in the silence of our hearts. (pause here) Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. Have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and follow in your ways, to the glory of your name.

Hear now this assurance of forgiveness and grace: Anyone in Christ becomes a new person altogether; the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!**

**Take a deep breath. And let it out.**

We give you thanks gracious and loving God, for sheltering us and for whispering to us words of assurance. We lift our prayers to you for those who are on our hearts this day: for our families and friends, for those who are recovering from surgery and those awaiting surgeries; for those mourning the loss of loved ones and those who are mourning racial injustice in our midst. Let justice begin with us, O God. Lead us and guide us in the words we speak and in the changes we wish to bring about, as you would have it be. We need your help to do these hard things. We give you thanks that we are right here and right now and that you are with all whom we love, those whom we disagree with. Inspire us as we minister to one another as best we can. We pray now in your words:

**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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but, deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen**

### **Celebration of Holy Communion**

**Invitation** I invite you all to share in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. That Body of Christ is not the piece of bread or the cookie on our plates. The Body of Christ is you and me as we are strengthened by sharing together this meal of hope and grace and presence.

The parables on the table this morning include a mask and a glove, symbols of care for the Body of Christ. As Jesus might have said --the Realm of God is like a mask of compassion on the Bread of Heaven and a gloved hand lifting the Cup of Blessing so that all be served and safe.

We pause to honor with tender memory the holy table in our church home and to consecrate with love for all God's children these many holy tables in our homes.

**Prayer of Consecration** We Are the Body of Christ dispersed and gathered at the same time, which is always true though we do not always see it. *Like the grains that become one whole loaf, like the notes that are woven into song, like droplets of water that are blended in the sea, we, as Christians, one body shall become.* \*

In our many kitchens, living rooms and deck, rest your hands lightly upon these elements which we set aside today to be a sacrament. Let us ask God's blessing upon them and upon us and upon all those who are in our prayers this morning.

Gentle Host, rest upon us as you rested upon water and light, earth and creatures, human beings, all in your image. Send your Spirit of life and love, power and blessing upon your children who are staying at home so that this Bread may be broken and gathered in love and this Cup poured out to give hope to all. Risen Christ, live in us, that we may live in you. Breathe in us, that we may breathe in you. Amen.

### **Words of Remembering**

We remember that the Creator blessed all creatures and all human beings with plants of the ground and fruit of the trees. We remember Sarah's hospitality to angels, manna in the wilderness, oil that never gave out, and the Psalmist speaking down the ages, "Taste and see that God is good. We remember. We remember a 12-year-old at a Passover in Jerusalem, a meal cooked by Peter's mother-in-law,

a small boy's lunch, Zacchaeus' feast, Martha's one-dish hospitality, a story about a fatted calf and dancing, another Jerusalem Passover, broken bread in Emmaus, and fish on the beach. We remember.

We remember communal dining inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter's unkosher dream that meant all God's children are accepted, Paul's communion on a sinking ship and a vision of the fruit of the trees in the New Jerusalem. We remember.

Our tables are as various as these and they are truly the meal of grace blessed by Creator, Christ and Indwelling Spirit.

**Sharing of the Elements** Let us at our many tables receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven.

**Repeat after me: We become the Body of Christ in the Bread we share.**

(Eat now and remember the body of Christ was given for us.)

Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the Cup of Blessing.

**Repeat after me: We are one in Christ in the Cup we share.**

(Drink now and remember that the blood of Christ was shed for us.)

**Prayer of Thanksgiving** In thanksgiving for this meal of grace, rejoicing that, in the holy dispersion of virtual worship, we claim that the risen Christ's love is not limited by buildings made with human hands, nor contained in human ceremonies, let us pray ...

O Holy One, our tongues have tasted the good news and our lives are filled with the Spirit that hovered over creation and blew fresh hope on Pentecost. Creator, open our hearts. Word, speak peace in our voices to all the people in all the hotspots and hurts of the world. As we journey *masked* through our lonely or dangerous or over-busy days, Holy Spirit, fill us with this blessing -- that it is good. Amen

*\*words adapted from verse three of "Una Espiga" "Sheaves of Summer" Author: Cesáreo Gabarain  
Translator: George Lockwood*

**Offertory:** The message today, encourages us to continue this risky business of being the church. Let us not ignore the God-nudges to be generous. We are once again reminded that we, as members and friends of this church family, have committed to minister to one another and to the world around us. Thank you to all of you whose various gifts have enabled Community United Church of Christ to faithfully carry on!

**\*Benediction:** Go now... Be the church. Protect the environment. Stay home. Care for the poor.

Wash your hands. Forgive often. Keep your social Distance. Check on the elderly. Love God.

Reject racism. Worship together online. Fight for the powerless. Give electronically. Support each other.

Share earthly and spiritual resources. Worship alone wherever you are. Embrace diversity. Pray daily.

Love God. Love one another. So we can all enjoy this life.

>>**New links: Please join us for Sunday coffee hour on Zoom at 10 am each week.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83105711931?pwd=MGM5SDJGZzJydDZUSUpHcTloYmJIUT09>

Meeting ID: 831 0571 1931 Password: 275883 Or by phone: 1 312 626 6799

>>**Tell the children about the Faith Formation Time with Children on Sundays at 9:30 am**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84072750591?pwd=dWk4aS9SSXpSeXd0TS9BTDVWVWM5QT09>

Meeting ID: 840 7275 0591 Password: 315870 Or, by phone: 1 312 626 6799

If you know someone who would appreciate receiving a paper copy of the weekly messages, please call me at 715-351-0450 or email me: [believe417@gmail.com](mailto:believe417@gmail.com) God bless us one and all.