

This is June 6, 2021. It's the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost!

On behalf of our family of faith at Community United Church of Christ,

Medford, WI, welcome to this time of worship!

“No matter who you are or where you are on your life’s journey,
you are welcome here!”

Let’s begin with this **Call to Worship**: by Susan Maginn, UU

From beyond the playful summer clouds, beyond the earth’s thin blue line,
from beyond the bright moon and the meteor showers,

we hear the call to look and listen carefully, to turn away from the world that buys and sells happiness,
to fully experience the luring whisper of your heart’s truth. Why not today? Why not now?

We are here and together at home in this evolving place, home in this ever-changing breath and body,
home in the dewy morning even as it reaches toward the high, hot noon.

We hear the call from far beyond and from deep within and we do not hear it alone.

Come, let us worship together!

Turn to those near you and offer the words, “Peace be with you.”

Turn and wave a greeting of peace to everyone around you...and call someone or text someone later
and continue this “peace passing” throughout this week. **“Peace be with you!”**

Hymn: “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” #496 Worship and Rejoice Hymnal

Chorus: Leaning (leaning on Jesus) Leaning (leaning on Jesus)

Safe and secure from all alarms

Leaning (leaning on Jesus) Leaning (leaning on Jesus)

Leaning on the everlasting arms

Verse 1: What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms;
What a blessedness what a peace is mine, leaning on the everlasting arms. **Chorus**

Verse 2: O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way, leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day, leaning on the everlasting arms. **Chorus**

Verse 3: What have I to dread what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms?
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms. **Chorus**

Song #31779, Words: Anthony Johnson Showalter Music: Elisha Albright Hoffman

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Linda will read online and in-person, today’s Scripture:

This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verses 25-34 from the Common English Bible

Worry about necessities

These are the words of Jesus: ²⁵ “Therefore, I say to you, don’t worry about your life, what you’ll eat or what you’ll drink, or about your body, what you’ll wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds in the sky. They don’t sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than they are?

²⁷ Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don’t wear themselves out with work, and they don’t spin cloth. ²⁹ But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn’t dressed like one of these.

³⁰ If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it’s alive today and tomorrow it’s thrown into the furnace, won’t God do much more for you, you people of weak faith? ³¹ Therefore, don’t worry and say, ‘What are we going to eat?’ or ‘What are we going to drink?’ or ‘What are we going to wear?’

³² Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ Instead, desire first and foremost God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ Therefore, stop worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own.

My Message today is entitled: “No Worries”

Please pray with me: Holy One of many names, **we believe in you, O God, the eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Creator and to your deeds we testify. You, O God, call the worlds into being and have created us humans in your image and likeness and have set before us the ways of life and death.* Still and always, Holy One, your ways and not our ways. We attempt to pray that you conform to our ways we offer you our best prayers, as we cringe with worry. Bless us and let us realize as we eventually do... that you’ve got this! All praise and honor to you. Amen.

*from **The United Church of Christ Statement of Faith**

Last summer, when our Five Practices Team recommended and the Church Council agreed, that our church services would be recorded by video and they would be made available on YouTube and Face Book, Pam and I began experimenting with recording. Pam was able to “edit out” all of the bloopers and to put together the segments of the recorded worship services, that included videos of some of you reading the scriptures. Thank you to all who have volunteered, and thanks to Pam and your/her technical and graphic arts expertise. We, along with many congregations *around the world*, have been able to offer a means of worship even though church doors have been closed for more than a year! We could depend on a recorded service to be available and a paper copy to be mailed out to those who asked... for over 56 weeks. I would like to thank Pam for the many hours she has spent in video production and Mike and Jerry for taking care of copying and mailing the “paper copies.” (Let’s thank them now.)

Also, “behind the scenes,” we quickly realized that I wasn’t tall enough to be seen over the light fixtures on the podium or the lectern. So, for the first few recording sessions, I was standing on a small stack of hymnals. We talked about how much easier it would be if there would be a platform. It was then that I asked Roger if he would make one. I think it was just a couple days later that he and Faith delivered one of the most beautiful pieces of wood “working” I have ever seen! Last Sunday afternoon, Faith and Roger (Higgins) brought a second one over...and now there is a platform on both sides. I appreciate the work of your hands, the woodworking expertise that is saving me from worrying about balancing on a pile of hymnals...and the comfort in knowing that if someone else stands on the platforms...they are safe...and are standing on a solid foundation!

The ongoing, sometimes unseen work of many hands has made it possible for us all to look around today and realize that we have been standing on the firm foundation of our faith. This year may have shaken our faith to its very core; just as the wind and rain, drought and floods, snow and hail have changed the landscape this past year, the virus came seeping in and has shifted everything that we ever considered normal. I do not have to make a list. You know it well.

Still, we are moving on. We are attempting to make plans...family plans, church plans. We hope and pray that what we do will be for the good of all. Did you ever notice that with every plan, there is accompanying worry? John Lennon once said: “Life is what happens while we are busy making other plans.” oh, so true!

What worries you right now? “Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?” This question is as timely today as when Jesus posed (POSED) it almost 2,000 years ago. *Does worrying do us any good?* It would be good to know the answer to that question, because we’ve put *huge* amounts of time and energy into worrying about all sorts of things that *might* happen.

I am going to go out on a limb here and say that *normal anxiety, the unavoidable worry that afflicts us, is not a bad thing.* If you feel anxious from time to time, you should not feel guilty about it because that “normal” worry causes us to take preventative measures against potential problems and even energizes us to make constructive changes in the way we live. We can’t love someone without worrying about threats to his or her well-being. We cannot be sensitive without occasional concern that we haven’t done all that we should have done. We cannot listen to the news without some worrying about the direction things in our world appear to be going.

When Jesus posed the question about adding to our life span through worry, he went on to make it clear that what he was calling for **instead** was for us to trust God. He pointed to the birds and to the flowers because they can serve as constant reminders of God’s loving care for us.

Jesus is telling us that since we trust God that all things will ultimately work out for the good, and since we trust that God cares for us even more, NO maybe...just the same as God cares for birds and flowers, we therefore should not worry.

There is something missing in this passage, though...and that is my name and your name. I will read it again...and each time you hear the word WORRY...add your name...You don't have to say it outloud. 'Therefore I tell you, do not **worry** about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them... ²⁷And, can ...you when you **worry**... add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸And why do you **worry** about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin...

³⁴ 'So do not **worry** about tomorrow...

Jesus tied the call for *no worries* to our faith and to that foundation upon which we were standing early in 2020 and on which we stand strong still today. May the work of our hands and the prayers of our hearts continue to prosper...as we give thanks that we can be together again. **Take a deep breath... and let it out!**

Time for Prayer: Let's spend a few moments in silent prayer. Now, look around at the beauty of this summer day, smell the new mown grass, enjoy the flowers and the breeze...look down at the solid ground beneath your feet...open your fingers and look at your hands... Let us pray: Loving God, we bring before you our deepest concerns and our every worry... we each hold many talents in our hands...we offer them to you now as we consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field...and turn our worries over to you, O God.

(God,) give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other. ~ Reinhold Niebuhr

Hear our prayers for those for whom we have been asked to pray...and for those who never thought to ask. We lift our prayers as we lift our hands now...in the name of Jesus. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION by Rev Dan Geslin, used with his permission

The Great Thanksgiving

One: The Holy Spirit is with you. **All: She is also with you.**

One: Let us open our hearts. **All: We open them up to our God.**

One: Let us give the Spirit thanks and praise. **All: This is a good and joyful thing to do.**

One: It is a right and good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give You praise, All-loving God, Creator of energy and matter, heaven and earth. Therefore, we celebrate You, joining our voices with the wind and the streams, the animals and flowers, the living and the dead, the stars and the planets and all the company of Creation, who forever sing their unending hymn to proclaim the glory of Your holy Name:

All: Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see how good God is.

Blessed are we who run to him. (Psalm 34:8 The Message)

Words of Remembrance

Pastor: And now, O God, we remember Jesus. *(brief silence)* We remember that he forgave our sins.

All: He breathed on us the peace of God.

Pastor: We remember that he called us "friends." **All: He taught us to love each other as he loved us.**

Pastor: And we remember that on the night he was handed over, while at supper with his friends, he took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying:

"Take and eat, all of you: This is my body, given for you."

And when the supper was over, he took a cup filled with wine, gave thanks for it, and shared it with them, saying: *"This is the new relationship with God, made possible because of my death."*

Take it, all of you, to remember me."

Our Table Prayer

One: Creating and Covenanting God, we thank You for the gifts of mind and body, call and response, community and spirit. Bless these simple symbols of the earth — this bread and this juice— that, through the marriage of our faith and Your grace, we may be what we eat:

the Body of the Risen Christ to carry on Jesus' ministry of love and liberation for all people.

Come, Holy Spirit, and teach us through the sharing of this meal how to heal the divisions of race, class, age, orientation and gender, and become one community in You. For it is not the bread and juice that become the Body of Christ through this meal, it is we who do.

Holy One, in You is heaven. Sacred is Your name! Your community come, Your yearning be done, among us so that earth may be heaven. With just enough bread to meet our needs for today, feed us. And forgive the wrong that we do to others in the same amount that we forgive those who do wrong against us. From trials too intense to endure, spare us. From all that is evil, free us. For the reign and the glory of the power of love are Yours — now and forever. Amen.

The Invitation: In the United Church of Christ, we celebrate an open communion... all are welcome to share the sacrament, the greatest celebration ever imagined!

All: We are asked to come as watchers of the Word, as participants in the struggle for justice and peace, as *party-ers* in the joy, as members of earth's most inclusive body: the body of God's love.

One: And although this celebration has been going on for generation upon generation, and the invitations were sent out eons in advance, it is a come-as-you-are celebration.

All: So, come if you are plain or fancy, joyous or sorrowful, young or old, male or female, gay or straight, whole or in pieces, confident or questioning.

One: Come! Come to the table where we are more welcomed and at home than anywhere else in the world.

Eat this bread. Drink this juice. Remember Jesus.

Prayer of Thanksgiving Pastor: Let us give thanks. **All: Loving God, in gratitude for this moment, we give ourselves to you. Take us out to live as changed people because we have shared this holy meal and cannot remain the same. Ask much of us, enable much by us, encourage many through us, in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

A Time of Intention and Thanks: Many thanks to all who, by your loving and by your giving, have made possible the loving ministry of Jesus to continue in our community. Let's dedicate the gifts given in person, through the mail and by electronic means. We give thanks, O God, for all that you have given us. Pour out your blessings on these gifts that we offer that they might be a source of blessing in our community and in our world. We dedicate our gifts in the name of the Creator, the Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Benediction. In the first letter of Peter, chapter 5; (edited) As this time of worship ends, go, and commit yourselves to: ⁶ ...being humble...under the mighty hand of God, and to ⁷Cast all our anxiety on God, knowing that God cares for us...

Cares Chorus: #493, Worship and Rejoice (2x)

I cast all my cares upon You, I lay all of my burdens down at Your feet
and anytime that I don't know what to do, I will cast all my cares upon You.

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**Thank you for being here. Thank you, Sue, for providing music outdoors
and thank you, Linda, for reading scripture inside and out!**

If you'd like to stay awhile, please do. Go now and continue to be safe!

You will find this *recorded service* at uccmedford.org
Click on "media." 715-351-0450

Pastor Mary Jo