

It's June 27 2021: 5th 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!”

A special welcome to those who are with us on Facebook “Live.” The recording of this service will be available on Facebook even after this time of worship has ended. You are welcome to share it.

Next Sunday is the 4th of July. Our worship service at 10 o’clock will be outdoors, weather-permitting. We will share the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Faith Formation time with the children will be outdoors, too, at 9:30. Please bring your lawn chairs!

Let’s begin with this **Call to Worship**, adapted from Psalm 30

One: Sing Praises to God, all you faithful ones **Many: God hears us in our fear and our sorrow**

One: Where there was no way **Many: God leads us in a new way**

One: Where there was no mercy **Many: God surprises us with fresh mercy**

One: Where there was weeping **Many: God invites us to step into a new dance.**

We will join in a time of Confession: God calls us in our lives to take a risk, to be like the woman in the gospel who reaches out to Jesus for healing for herself; or the father who risks the scorn of others to bring Jesus to his dying daughter. Let us ponder for a moment the places of our lives where we may resist turning to God for healing and change. (silence)

Litany of Confession

When we resist your call to open our hearts to allow the freshness of your grace to enter:
please repeat after me: **God have mercy.**

When we close our eyes to unexpected possibilities of healing and reconciliation:
please repeat after me: **Christ have mercy.**

When we let fear overwhelm us, and cling to the security of what we know instead of risking new steps toward your freedom and justice: please repeat after me: **God have mercy.**

Assurance of Grace: God’s mercies are fresh every morning. In Christ, God offers forgiving grace and welcome into a community of trust, abundance, and hope. Let us give thanks for the mercy of God, and pass the peace of Christ in community among us.

Call to Worship, Invocation and Offering Prayer from “Belief, not Fear: Service Prayers for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost” was written by the Rev. Susan A. Blain, Minister for Worship and Gospel Arts.

After you turn to those near you and offer the words, “Peace be with you,” turn and wave a greeting of peace to everyone around you. Later, call someone or text someone and continue this “peace passing” throughout this week. **“Peace be with you!”**

Hymn: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” #473 Worship and Rejoice Hymnal

Verse 1: What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

Verse 2: Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer!

Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Verse 3: Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior still our refuge--take it to the Lord in prayer!

Do thy friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!

In his arms he'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

Pam O. will read the scripture: A reading from the Gospel of **Mark, chapter 5, verses 21-43**
from Common English Bible, entitled, “*Jesus Heals Two People*”

²¹ Jesus crossed the lake again, and on the other side a large crowd gathered around him on the shore.

²² Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders, came forward. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet

²³ and pleaded with him, “My daughter is about to die. Please, come and place your hands on her so that she can be healed and live.” ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

A swarm of people were following Jesus, crowding in on him. ²⁵ A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a lot under the care of many doctors and had spent everything she had without getting any better. In fact, she had gotten worse. ²⁷ Because she had heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothes. ²⁸ She was thinking, “If I can just touch his clothes, I’ll be healed.” ²⁹ Her bleeding stopped immediately, and she sensed in her body that her illness had been healed.

³⁰ At that very moment, Jesus recognized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” ³¹ His disciples said to him, “Don’t you see the crowd pressing against you? Yet you ask, ‘Who touched me?’” ³² But Jesus looked around carefully to see who had done it.

³³ The woman, full of fear and trembling, came forward. Knowing what had happened to her, she fell down in front of Jesus and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He responded, “Daughter, your faith has healed you; go in peace, healed from your disease.”

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking with her, messengers came from the synagogue leader’s house, saying to Jairus, “Your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher any longer?” ³⁶ But Jesus overheard their report and said to the synagogue leader, “Don’t be afraid; just keep trusting.”

³⁷ He didn’t allow anyone to follow him except Peter, James, and John, James’ brother.

³⁸ They came to the synagogue leader’s house, and he saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, “What’s all this commotion and crying about? The child isn’t dead. She’s only sleeping.” ⁴⁰ They laughed at him, but he threw them all out. Then, taking the child’s parents and his disciples with him, he went to the room where the child was.

⁴¹ Taking her hand, he said to her, “*Talitha koum,*” (tuh-LEE-tuh coom) which means, “Young woman, get up.” ⁴² Suddenly the young woman got up and began to walk around. She was 12 years old. They were shocked! ⁴³ He gave them strict orders that no one should know what had happened. Then he told them to give her something to eat.

The title of my **Message** today is: “*Reach Out*”

Please pray with me. Gracious God, **In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, ... crucified and risen, (God has) you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself (to himself.)...* You know exactly what human suffering feels like. You know our illnesses and are aware of the pain of ailing hips and broken legs, arthritis and allergies. We come before you today asking for relief from our injuries and ailments and that your touch might relieve our suffering, our anxiety and our fears. Amen.

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

Several years ago, the Menninger Institute in Houston, TX, did a study on babies who wouldn’t cry. We do not need scientific evidence to tell us that babies cry because they instinctively know that this is the way to get attention or help. The Menninger Mental Health facility had in their care babies who had lived with abuse and who, because their parents had not responded to them crying for hours on end... eventually quit crying. It was as if they had learned that it was not worth trying anymore.

Some people from retirement and nursing homes were contacted and they were brought in every day to hold the babies and to rock them. The object was to get them to start crying again...and it worked! That physical touch had made the difference.

As important as physical touch is, there is another kind... spiritual touch. It influences and impacts our lives. It is when God whispers in our ears and when we are nudged to make a difference in someone's life. It is when we touch someone without any physical contact...by means of the encouraging words we speak... of our caring and kind actions... and of prayers that we lift to God.

We have spent many months NOT touching anyone physically. The safer pandemic recommendation of avoiding in-person contact with anyone besides our immediate families or our small "bubbles" of friends have kept us away from one another's homes, from shaking hands and hugging. We have gone so far as to not anything that anyone has touched...without slathering on hand sanitizer or or washing our hands with soap and hot water for 30 seconds. We have learned that there are new "un-touchables" in our church building...the pew bibles and the hymnals, the bulletins and the communion elements.

How has this no-touching affected you? Have **we** given up crying, too? A friend who is a mental health consultant has reminded me that *we all* have been traumatized this past year. Each one of us has reacted to that trauma a little bit differently. I have heard some of you say, "I hadn't hugged anyone in a year, and when I did, it was amazing!" "I am so used to staying home, that it feels strange being able to go out in public." We have yearned for the touches of our family and friends after only being "in touch" by internet, by "Zoom" and by telephone. I can honestly say that getting back together with family and friends was difficult for me, at first, but now... each time it is a gift to be treasured.

Last Sunday, I attended the installation of Rev. Will Nelson at Union Congregational UCC in Three Lakes. The invitation stated that masks were only required if you had not been vaccinated. There were 15 NWA Clergy and 20 members of the congregation present in that sanctuary wearing no masks. It was amazing...that feeling of reaching out to shake hands and hug one another, with a little hesitation perhaps, but with no fear! Have you felt it?

Today's gospel involves two people who were in traumatic situations. In those days, neither someone who was bleeding nor someone who was dead were to be touched...they were considered "unclean."

In his compassion and care however, Jesus reaches out and touches them both. We get a glimpse of the deep faith of Jairus who trusted that Jesus would heal his daughter. Jairus does not represent authority here; he symbolizes every desperately worried parent that ever lived as he begs Jesus to help his child. Jesus responds instantly. The text simply states that "Jesus went with him."

Sensing high drama in the making, the crowd then follows Jesus and Jairus as the story suddenly shifts to a woman stubbornly threading her way through the crowd, moving closer to Jesus. She, too, is seeking relief from the trauma of her thus far, incurable illness. Her deep faith assures her that she will be healed merely by touching Jesus or part of his clothing. Besides physical healing, Jesus gives her the added gift of peace and attends to her spiritual being as well the physical. The crowd watches in disbelief and the disciples, are astonished one more time at the wonders that are unfolding right before their eyes.

Barbara Brown Taylor considers these miracles a "preview of the kingdom" for all of us living our lives in "the human condition." "**God is God, and we are not,**" she reminds us.

Did it ever occur to you how Jesus might have felt after he healed someone? I believe that this is one of the few places in scripture where it is written, **Mark 5:30** New Revised Standard Version: ³⁰*Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"*

This story is another example of Jesus sharing "our common lot," our human nature. How? Well, when you reach out to help someone or spend time listening to a friend's problems, or visit someone in the nursing home or someone sick in the hospital...do you ever leave feeling *drained*...worn out? It is a sign that you are

helping to carry one another's burdens and that your "touch" of compassion has left someone feeling a little better and at peace knowing that you cared.

These stories today of the healing power of Jesus invite us to explore what it means to seek God's compassionate care. Think for a moment about times when you needed help and didn't feel you could ask and then someone came along just at the right time and was there for you in your need. How did you feel? I believe that God sent that person to you.

Those who have received the assistance of Community Mission with Jesus, or the local food pantries, or the Salvation Army, or Social Services, or ADRC, or Stepping-Stones or those who are homeless and living in a local hotel right now deeply grateful that someone reached out and helped them. Do you know how it feels to be homeless or to not have enough food? Ask volunteers in any of the local "assistance" organizations how they feel after walking through the details and making arrangements for just one person to be helped. Whether they realize it or not, they are taking seriously the call of Jesus to "go and do likewise;" to reach out and touch someone...as they hear and answer the "cry of the poor" in our midst.

~William Penn once said, "I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again."

We dare not let anyone cry so much that they no longer call out. Glance back to former days when God has touched you and go, do likewise to one another. Mental health experts say that in dealing with trauma, we should be sure to take some time each day for self-care...and movement...walking and stretching, for example. I have been giving it some thought. Why not let part of that *movement* be reaching out!

Adopt a new way of life in this *nearly post-pandemic* time. Look around the Gospels and watch Jesus tirelessly healing and teaching right until the end of his life: even in his words from the cross and even now this hour, right here and right now. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Reach your arms out in front of you...reach up if you can and as you do, take a deep breath. Bring them down to your lap and let it out.

Time for Prayer: Let us pray: God of the day and night, of sunshine and rain; God of a cold north wind and a warm summer breeze; you are above all and in all and beyond all and around all. You remind us again that we are invited into a deeper friendship with you as we come to you, O God, with good intentions, and with uncertainty. We come in prayer with petty irritations, hurt feelings, broken promises, pain or sorrow. We come with broken relationships, and at times, with some mean-spiritedness and anger. We come overwhelmed.

We come believing that you are near as we offer the prayers of our hearts to you in silence.... Merciful God, we lift to you those who are hurting and those who reach out to have you touch them...those awaiting surgery and those recovering from surgery...those awaiting the results of medical testing and those undergoing chemotherapy. We lift to you especially the families of Surfside condos in Florida.

We give thanks for and ask your blessings on those who have reached out to us and have helped to pull us through this time of pandemic... our church community, family and friends; healthcare workers, IT experts, postal employees, radio and television staff, people who stock shelves at grocery stores and harvest crops; truck drivers and ambulance drivers, local and state police, those who lead us in local and national government. The list goes on and on, loving God. You know them all.

Please pray with me the prayer of Mother Teresa of Calcutta....Lord, open our eyes, that we may see you in our brothers and sisters. Lord, open our ears, that we may hear the cries of the hungry, the cold, the frightened, the oppressed. Lord, open our hearts, that we may love each other as you love us.

Renew in us your spirit. Lord, free us and make us one. --Mother Teresa, as quoted in *Amen: Prayers and Blessings From Around the World*, compilers Suzanne Slesin and Emily Gwathmey (New York: Viking, 1995).

Show us ways you would have us reach out to one another as we pray in the name of Jesus: 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.

A Time of Intention and Thanks: Many thanks to all who, by your gifts have made possible the ministry of Jesus to continue in our community. Let's dedicate the gifts that have been given in person, through the mail and by electronic means. **Let's pray:** Generous God, receive our gifts this day and use them so that we may continue to be a part of your great work in this world. Through our giving, bring a brighter day of justice and love, not just in our community but in the world beyond these walls. Strengthen our church and the whole United Church of Christ so that we may grow together each day into a powerful voice for healing and peace. Amen.

Hymn Response: "He Touched Me"

1. Shackled by a heavy burden, 'neath a load of guilt and shame,
then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same.
He touched me, oh, he touched me and oh, the joy that floods my soul!
Something happened, and now I know, he touched me, and made me whole.
2. Since I've met this blessed Savior, since he's cleansed and made me whole,
I will never cease to praise Him; I'll shout it while eternity rolls.
He touched me, oh, he touched me and oh, the joy that floods my soul!
Something happened, and now I know, he touched me, and made me whole.

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**>Thank you, Sue, for providing music; thank you, Pam/ Council Members for ushering;
thanks to Pam for reading; and for turning on the camera!**

Benediction:

Go now and let it be your intention to reach out to someone who needs a hopeful and healing touch today. May God bless us and keep us, May God lift us up and guide us.

May God's face shine on us and give us peace.

Peace be with you and continue to be safe!

**You will find this recorded service on FaceBook
715-351-0450**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Mary Jo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and is set against a light gray rectangular background.