

**Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church**  
**Barboursville, West Virginia**  
**June 14, 2020**

**Prelude**                    There Is a Redeemer    Text and music: Melody Green  
Mark Baker

**Call to Worship**        1 John 4:9, 10

In this is love,  
not that we loved God,  
but that God loved us  
and sent God's Son into the world  
so that we might live through him.

**Hymn**                  Lord, Speak to Me that I May Speak

Text: Frances Ridley Havergal; Music: Robert Schumann

Lord, speak to me that I may speak  
in living echoes of your tone.

As you have sought, so let me seek,  
your erring children lost and lone.

O teach me, Lord, that I may teach  
the precious truths which you impart,  
and wing my words that they may reach  
the hidden depths of many a heart.

O fill me with your fullness, Lord,  
until my very heart overflows,  
in kindling thought and glowing word,  
your love to tell, your praise to show.

**Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God,  
you have called us to serve you,  
yet without your grace, our efforts are insufficient..  
Grant that your Holy Spirit  
may direct our hearts in all things,  
and lead us in the ways of peace,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Scripture Readings**

Psalm 32:8

Philippians 4:9

Thessalonians 5:11

### **Message**

As we move into the summer, I am taking a brief detour from preaching from the lectionary texts. For today, I have selected some verses from the Psalms and Paul's letters to the early Church to guide our thoughts.

When I was in seminary, a long time ago, I spent some time each summer on the campus in Philadelphia. We sometimes took field trips. One day we rode the train into center city Philadelphia.

One of the first things I noticed was that the other passengers were largely quiet. Many had their faces hidden from view by the morning paper.

As we were walking from one place to the next, a classmate came along beside me. He was one of the international students from Romania. Very friendly. Full of energy.

He made a comment that I seemed to have left my smile back in the dormitory. That was pretty much accurate. Being in such a big city is intimidating and I was trying to pay special attention to our route in case, heaven forbid, I got lost.

He said, "Let's try an experiment. When we pass the next person, we will smile and see if they smile back."

I was game and played along. On a sunny summer day in center city Philly, on a busy sidewalk, we looked into the eyes of those we passed and simply smiled.

The results were mixed. No. That's not right. It was disappointing...few people smiled in return or even acknowledged our presence. Now maybe there was a reason they were so somber and disinterested. Maybe some were not feeling well. Maybe they were under pressure at work. Maybe there was trouble at home. Maybe...

We have had to adapt to changing circumstances in these past several months. You may not have found much to smile about. I'm sorry about that. Because we are not together on a weekly basis, we are all feeling a little down. Human beings, after all, are created to be together.

I have done a little research this week and I want to share with you the results.

Smiling can transform our outlook. Psychologists and scientists have argued for years that emotions can be regulated by behavior. We usually think the opposite to be true. That we smile in response to being happy. And that is so, but, scientists say we can also create happiness by the simple act of forming a smile.

When a person smiles, it triggers physiological changes in the brain that cool the blood. This helps control our mood, and we are likely to experience a feeling of happiness or satisfaction. We can interpret this as changing our inward emotions by changing our outward expression. What we feel in our hearts comes out in our behavior, and how we act over time is what we become. Consistently reminding ourselves to smile throughout the day may eventually change our hearts. When our hearts change, the way we encounter the world changes. We see life as less intimidating and more like an opportunity that awaits us.

Louis Armstrong use to sing, “When you’re smiling, the whole world smiles with you.” He was onto something. Neuroscience has shown that merely seeing a smile, or a frown, activates mirror neurons in the brain that mimic the emotions. When someone smiles at us, we smile back, and vice-versa.

This theory has caught on in a number of industries, including the hospitality business. I am told that at Walt Disney World, employees are to adhere to the “10/5 Rule.” When employees are within ten feet of a guest, they must make eye contact and smile. When they get within five feet of the guest, they must say, “Hello.” The guests almost always return the greeting. No wonder it’s called the “happiest place on earth.”

Why do I share this today? Because for several weeks past and many more into the future, we have been wearing masks in public to help control the Coronavirus. Our smiles can be covered up, if we smile at all. Under that mask, you may be experiencing all sorts of thoughts and feelings. Anger, fear, anxiety, irritation. Masks are hot, they mess up your makeup, and the elastic bands can leave the fragile skin behind your ears abraded.

But, maybe you will have an experience like Rev. Susan Sparks of New York City. When she and her husband donned masks and back-packs and set about to grocery shop one day, they passed many similarly-attired people. Most wore flat expressions. But, one young woman looked right at them and smiled. And both Susan and her husband smiled back. They didn’t even think about it. It was a natural response.

Now, if the girl was wearing a mask, how did Susan know the girl smiled? Because she “Smized.” If you’ve ever watched “America’s Next Top Model,” “smize” means smiling with your eyes.

And in this era of Covid 19, this era of wearing masks, and adapting to contingency plans, when we are under advice to maintain a safe distance and not engage in any public displays of affection like handshaking or hugging, what could be more important to our mental health, to our spiritual health, than to smize?

So, smize, and I will bet that the whole world will smize with you.

### **Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer**

God of goodness and grace,

we give you thanks for all things, especially your love that has been poured into our hearts through your Holy Spirit.

Nothing is too wonderful for you.

You brought the whole creation into being and set us in it. You promised your fruit to those with withered dreams.

The fulfillment of your promises came in your Son, Jesus, who revealed your love and compassion for all the world,

proclaiming the good news of the kingdom,

healing the sick and broken of all that afflicts them.

In the fullness of love, he gave his life for us and made a way for us to join him in your realm.

Forgive our wayward and foolish ways and turn us toward our Savior in gratitude for grace given.

Today we thank you for occasions of joy in our community: for birthdays, anniversaries, and weddings. We give thanks for the smaller, quieter blessings revealed every day. We pray for the sick, the tired, the poor and helpless. Equip us, your hands, feet, and voices on earth, to help meet the needs of our neighbors near and far.

Wrap your comfort around the hearts of the troubled, the bereaved, the worried and fearful ones, and assure them of your abiding presence.

We pray these things in Jesus’ name and for his sake, saying, Our Father...Amen.

### **Blessing**                      Laughingbird.net

The Lord seeks willing workers for the harvest.

Therefore go out into the world;

proclaim the good news of the nearness of God;

call all who will hear to wholeness, to life, to God’s Shalom.

And may God pour love into your hearts;

may Christ Jesus open the way of grace to you;

and may the Holy Spirit work through all things  
to build you up in endurance, character, and hope. Amen..

**Postlude**            Though I May Speak    Text: Hal Hobson; Music: Irish Melody