

Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church
955 Main St.
Barboursville, West Virginia 25504
Worship for October 18, 2020
Children's Sabbath
(A program of the Children's Defense Fund)

Prelude

Call to Worship

Gather our hearts, O God, knitting us together across differences and division to live with your compassion.

Gather our minds, O God, from distraction and distance to focus on you and your children.

Gather our wills, O God, to be strong and courageous in pursuit of your justice.

By the power of your Holy Spirit, make us one in heart, mind, and will, that we may worship you in unity today.

Hymn Child of Blessing, Child of Promise Ronald S. Cole-Turner

Child of blessing, child of promise,
baptized with the Spirit's sign.

With this water God has sealed you
unto love and grace divine.

Child of love, our love's expression,
love's creation, love indeed!

Fresh from God, refresh our spirits,
into joy and laughter lead.

Child of joy, our dearest treasure,
God's you are, from God you came.
Back to God we humbly give you;
live as one who bears Christ's name.

Child of God, your loving Parent,
learn to know whose child you are.
Grow to laugh and sing and worship,
trust and love God more than all.

Prayer of Confession

God of infinite possibility, we confess that too often we are stuck in “what is” rather than working toward “what could be.” We become overwhelmed by pain, need, problems, and the pandemic.

Forgive us, O God, for living too little in the large expanse of your love. Fill us with your courage and compassion, vision and determination, to embody your love, seek your will, and strive for your justice that will enable all children to thrive in lives of joy and blessing.

Forgive those things we have done that we should not have done, and for neglecting those things we should have done, to the glory of your name.

Take, O take me as I am.

Summon out what I shall be.

Set your seal upon my heart and live in me. Repeat.

Assurance of Pardon

“Behold, I make all things new.” Friends, anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life is gone and a new life has begun. Know you are forgiven and be at peace.

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 65: 17-25

Gospel Reading

Luke 8:4-8, 11-15

The Morning Message

This morning I want to speak especially to our church’s children and young people.

You may have heard me tell about this experience before. I like to share it because it was very important.

There was a day in my childhood that shaped my life and my faith in Jesus.

I have lived a lot of years...64 of them. And for all of those years, I have known Jesus loves me.

Many years ago, when I was about four or five, I was in Sunday School. My classmates and I were sitting in a circle of small wooden chairs around our teacher. The room was bright and airy. I can still see white curtains gently moving with the breeze blowing through the open window. I can still smell the fresh summer air.

The teacher announced we were going to play a game. She would say, “There’s someone here that Jesus loves, and that person...” and then she would give some clue to identify one of our classmates. When we guessed correctly, she would say, “Yes! Jesus loves Thomas or Tara” or another child.

We enjoyed that game a lot. When the teacher said, “There’s someone here that Jesus loves and she is wearing new black shoes...” we all looked at our feet. I looked at my feet. I was wearing new black shoes! Jesus loves me! Jesus loves me! What a thrill!

And from that day to this one, I've always known that Jesus knows me by name and he loves me.

In the Old Testament lesson today, we learned about people who had a very hard life. They had to move from place to place. Sometimes they were hungry and tired and worried. Some were sick. There was no work to do so there was no way to earn money to buy things they needed. It was a sad and scary time.

God sent a man called Isaiah to be with them, to share their life, and to give them God's message: "Don't be afraid. I have called you by name, you belong to me."

Even in the scariest times, God promised to be with them.

Isaiah taught them that God was creating something new. A world where there was no fear or sadness or hunger. And God asked them, "Do you see it?"

The people had to use their imaginations, but, yes, they could see that God was creating something new, that there would one day be an end to their suffering.

We have been going through a hard time, haven't we? For many months, we've been paying close attention to our health because of a disease called Covid 19, or Coronavirus. It can make people very sick.

Our lives have changed a lot lately. What are some ways things have changed?

We wear masks out in public. We wash our hands a lot. We use hand sanitizer when we can't wash up at a sink. We don't go to big events. The parks and playgrounds have been closed. Some of our favorite places may have closed. Some of us haven't seen our family members or friends for a long time. Some of us are going to school. Some of us aren't. Some of our parents are at home with us. Some aren't. Some have help with their schoolwork. Some don't.

These are big changes and they may make us uncomfortable or sad or even angry. And that's normal. That's the way the people in our Bible story felt.

The message Isaiah had for them is the same one he would give us: Do not be afraid. God loves us. God knows our names. We belong to God. And God will help us. Can you see how God is helping? Maybe God is doing something new. Can we see it? Can we imagine a day when we don't have to wear masks all the time? Can we imagine a day when we aren't worried about getting the Coronavirus? Can we imagine a time when all children have a home to live in and parents to love them? Can we imagine a day when all God's children will get along?

That day is coming when God will declare, "See, I make all things new."

I can almost see it. Can you?

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

O God, who makes things new, we turn our hearts to you on this Children's Sabbath. We pray for the Church, that we may become a true reflection of your welcome for people of all ages and circumstances. Embolden us to bear witness to you where justice is denied, especially to vulnerable children. Teach us to be the embodiment of your love, especially for the most marginalized of your beloved children.

Source of compassion, we pray for the world, in which disease knows no boundary and suffering is a shared language. We ask that love will unite us in action that recognizes our common humanity. Help us to understand that what we want for our children is what every loving parent wants: good health, education, friendships, adequate food and shelter, love.

Source of hope, we pray for our nation, wounded by disease and death, division and distrust, sorrow and loss. Replace our fears with your peace and help us to trust in the promise of your realm, so that we may imagine a fulfilling future for all people.

We lift up our concerns for all those whose lives have been disrupted by storms, fires, floods, famine, violence, oppression, neglect, and abuse. Lord God, our Rock and our Redeemer, we pray that you will supply every need, especially for those in the fellowship of this congregation. Receive the praises of your grateful people and make our lives a living prayer, praying as Jesus taught us, saying,

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. Amen.

Blessing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Postlude

Announcements

Work is scheduled to begin this week on the heating and air conditioning project. We look forward to returning to the building for worship and other activities when the work is completed.

Early voting begins October 21 and runs through October 31 at the Cabell County Courthouse and Milton City Hall.

Looking ahead: While Covid safety guidelines indicate large gatherings are not yet advisable, the Barboursville area ministers recognize the importance of the annual Community Thanksgiving Service. A virtual service is being planned for this year so that we might reaffirm our unity of faith and purpose. Details to follow.

Your tithes and gifts are always appreciated. For those interested in contributing to community service efforts during the holiday season, information will be provided as soon as plans are finalized.