

Worship for July 4, 2021

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

**God alone is our sovereign, to whom we bow in allegiance.**

Come, let us worship the Lord, our God,

**the Ruler of all nations.**

\*Hymn O Beautiful for Spacious Skies *Glory to God* 338

Call to Confession

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, says the Lord:

I will put my law within them,

and I will write it on their hearts,

and I will be their God,

and they shall be my people.

I will forgive their evil deeds,

and remember their sin no more.

Prayer of Confession

**Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo.**

**Forgive what our lips fear to tremble to name,**

**what our hearts can no longer bear, and what has become for us a consuming fire of judgment.**

**Set us free from a past we cannot change,**

**open to us a future in which we can be changed,**

**and grant us grace to grow more and more in your likeness and image,**

**through Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Lord. Amen.**

Take, O Take Me as I Am *Glory to God* 698

Declaration of Forgiveness

Hear the good news!

Who is in a position to condemn?

Only Christ,

and Christ died for us,

Christ rose for us,

Christ reigns in power for us,

Christ prays for us.  
Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.  
The old life is gone and a new life has begun.  
Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:  
in Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven. Alleluia! Amen.

### Time With Our Young Disciples

Scripture Reading Isaiah 58:1-12  
Morning Message

As I was reading this passage from Isaiah, it reminded me of one of our Presbyterian distinctives: The Great Ends of the Church. These are a set of statements, drafted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to guide the vision and mission of the Presbyterian Church.

So, how would we use the great ends? How do we apply them to our faith and life? We might use them at the end of a church year to reflect on the ways in which we lived out the great ends as a church. We would likely put newsprint around the room and order pizza to make it more fun. Hopefully, there will be a number of good memories to reflect on. The end of the meeting might find all of us in a prayer of thanksgiving for what God had done through us.

So, who can name all six of the great ends of the church?  
I confess, I can't. So I did a little research this week.

Here we go:

**The first great end is the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind.**  
This is how a church in New Jersey lives that out: They have joined a ministry called "The Church Has Left the Building." One Sunday in October, the church closes its doors and sends small groups of all ages out into the community to proclaim the gospel through hands-on work.

Rev. Eryn Mera says "We have to re-think what the church is." Groups have been sent to do community clean-up and beautification, making blankets for cancer patients, serving the hungry through a food pantry or community meal, visiting the elderly and shut-in, and working on Habitat for Humanity projects.

Five other churches are part of the "Church Has Left the Building" effort. At the end of the day, all the work groups come together as one united community of faith, giving thanks and praise to God for their experiences. They like to say that this project helped them discover how Jesus can prompt his people to live on the outside what we believe on the inside.

**The second great end is the shelter, nurture and spiritual fellowship of the children of God.**

In Lincoln, Nebraska, the congregation of the Eastridge Presbyterian Church gather early one Sunday morning a month to participate in “GIFT,” which stands for “Growing in Faith Together.” Gift features an intergenerational learning activity, fellowship time and breakfast. A theme is adopted each season. Some past themes have been “loving thy neighbor,” “faith and service,” and “special days in the church year.”

I loved learning about this project because it originated with a colleague of mine, Thomas Dummermuth, who came to the US from Switzerland to be near his fiancé while she was a medical resident at CAMC. He served the Ravenswood Church while they lived in the area. Lincoln, Nebraska is her hometown. They married and moved there as soon as she finished her training. God be good to them and their three children.

**The third great end is the maintenance of divine worship.**

Faith Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, North Carolina has created a worship space for children called “The Playground.” In order to accommodate a casket for a funeral service, some pews were removed from the small sanctuary. Instead of re-installing them, they placed a child-size table and chairs in front of the pulpit. The children gather there as the service begins. A variety of art supplies are provided so that they may interpret what they see and hear in worship. The pastor, Rev. Karen Ware Jackson, engages both the children and the adults in sermon conversations, the reading of scripture and prayers. She likes to say that “this little church made space for God to bring new life out of death. The playground is making us whole. We are the body of Christ. Kids are a loud and messy part of the body, but when we pull the kids out, it’s like trying to worship blindfolded. Kids are distracting, yes, but they bring us life and they bring us joy, and they bring surprising depth and mirth. They understand the holy power of prayer and praise. They are hungry for God.”

**The fourth great end is the preservation of the truth.** Megan and Dave Collins are co-pastors of Maitland Presbyterian Church in Orlando, Florida. They host a pod-cast called “Everything Jesus Taught.” They take up topics like money, forgiveness, family, and explore the way Jesus’ life and teaching can inform these topics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dave says, “Truth isn’t something we receive. We have to interact with it, talk about it, digest it, parse out how it works in our lives. We wrestle out loud as we work to fully comprehend what Jesus taught.”

“Truth is what he taught, but how can we translate that in the world we live in and the lives we live is the challenge,” Megan Collins says.

To engage in this type of conversation takes special skill, the ability to really listen, and to respond well to criticism. It is hard, courageous work. I believe it is the Lord’s work.

**The next great end is the promotion of social righteousness.** There are not many Presbyterians in Idaho, but, as soon as the Presbyterian Church in the Tetons opened its doors in 2012, a young woman, Monica, became curious about the church and began worshiping there. Recently approved to stay in the US through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, she received a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and got a work permit and a driver's license.

Monica found a job with the local Family Safety Network. In that capacity, she was often interacting with Emily Bilcher, who happened to be the wife of the Pastor of the Church in the Tetons, Karlin Bilcher. This frequent interaction allowed Monica to open up and share her life story, its challenges and hardships, its joys and blessings, her hopes for the future. Before long, other members of the church, having heard Monica's story, were interested in helping the immigrant population in their community. The church also struck up a relationship with the primarily Hispanic Good Shepherd Catholic Church nearby.

As you might expect, not everyone in the church is enthused about the direction this ministry has taken. But, as the pastor explains, the community and the church are both made up of a diverse collection of people who don't always think or believe the same way.

So they practice what they call "radical hospitality," because we "don't know much about the lives of people who are different from us." They believe this is their call.

**The last great end is the exhibition of the kingdom of heaven to the world.** Sometimes an idea is sparked or a new initiative sounds interesting to church folks. But, such things are disregarded because there are obstacles or there are meager resources, financial or human. This is the situation in which two women at Memorial West Presbyterian Church in Newark, New Jersey found themselves.

They had concerns about the working poor in their town. They could see every day the plight of their neighbors. They may work, but at very low wage jobs. They had childcare problems, children had school problems, families had their own issues. A lot of this was brought on through no fault of their own. Paychecks just could not stretch to meet their needs and that led to a multitude of issues.

So, on Reformation Sunday, these two women went to talk to members of the Livingston Presbyterian Church to consider how to meet the needs of the suffering in their community. What quickly developed was the Seventh Street Bistro, a ministry offering free meals every Saturday. The Bistro also provides help with personal care items and clothing. But that's not all. They have sponsored health fairs and special holiday events and opportunities.

As positive as these events are, the people involved say the greatest benefit is the relationships that have been formed, the prayers and support that are in good supply among the workers and the guests.

The take-away would seem to be that, if you have a sense that someone near you has need, and you feel inadequate to address it, or think you aren't prepared or resourced, think again. Reach out for help. It may well lead to a reformation.

So, those are the great ends of the Presbyterian Church. And examples that jumped out at me. Keep your eyes, ears, and hearts open...God's people are living out the great ends of the church.

\*Affirmation of Faith    The Apostles' Creed    *Glory to God, p. 35*  
Gloria Patri    *Glory to God 581*

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Prayer of Dedication

**Almighty and merciful God, from whom comes all that is good,  
we praise you for your mercies, for your goodness that has created us,  
your grace that sustains us,  
the discipline that corrects us,  
your patience that has borne with us,  
and your love that has redeemed us.**

**Receive our gifts, offered in humility and gratitude, that the world may know, love and  
serve you. We give in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

\*Hymn    Live Into Hope    *Glory to God 772*

\*Blessing

Go out into the world in peace;

have courage;

hold onto what is good;

return no one evil for evil;

strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak and help the suffering;

honor all people;

love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

\*Postlude

### Announcements

A congregational meeting will be held at the beginning of worship next Sunday, July 11, for the purpose of electing Trustees. Newly elected Elders and Trustees will be ordained and/or installed during worship.

The Session will meet after worship next Sunday, July 11.