



## THE PEACE OF CHRIST

It is normally our custom when we gather to extend the Peace of Christ to one another. Even though we are physically apart at this time, may you know that peace.

## INVITATION TO WORSHIP

Let us come together in these sad and challenging and hopeful times, separated yet together in spirit, to hear God's wisdom and to feel God's love. Let us be especially reminded of God's call to us to be compassionate, to acknowledge that we all have the same needs for dignity and purpose, and so in our shared lives on this earth we can offer each other loving companionship, safety and encouragement.

OPENING HYMN                      *Called As Partners In Christ's Service*                      Tune: BEECHER  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyzwOew3pVI&t=100s>

1. Called as partners in Christ's service , Called to ministries of grace  
We respond with deep commitment, Fresh new lines of faith to trace  
May we learn the art of sharing, Side by side and friend with friend  
Equal partners in our caring ,To fulfill God's chosen end
2. Christ's example Christ's inspiring, Christ's clear call to work and worth  
Let us follow never faltering, Reconciling folk on earth  
Men and women richer poorer, All God's people young and old  
Blending human skills together, Gracious gifts from God unfold
3. Thus new patterns for Christ's mission, In a small or global sense  
Help us bear each other's burdens, Breaking down each wall or fence  
Words of comfort words of vision, Words of challenge said with care  
Bring new power and strength for action, Make us colleagues free and fair
4. So God grant us for tomorrow, Ways to order human life  
That surround each person's sorrow, With a calm that conquers strife  
Make us partners in our living, Our compassion to increase  
Messengers of faith thus giving, Hope and confidence and peace

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Colossians 3:11-12, 14-15

<sup>11</sup>... there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

<sup>12</sup>As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>14</sup>Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.

Matthew 9:35 - 10:1

<sup>35</sup>Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness.

<sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup>therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

10 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

MORNING MEDITATION  
Cox

*Walking With*

The Rev. Marcia Lynn

How does it feel to be in the presence of someone who is compassionate? What does it mean to be a compassionate person? Are you one?

Our lectionary reading this week from the book of Matthew describes Jesus going about his ministry teaching and healing. This is not unusual of course, but the author of the gospel notes that "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

All Christians, indeed all people of goodwill, are called to be compassionate, but this attitude, this way of being in the world, has especially been on my mind during these last several weeks. Following the tragic and brutal murder of George Floyd have we certainly noticed a long overdue groundswell of national and international support for justice for our African American brothers and sisters.

We can only hope that after centuries of discrimination and abuse, a significant majority of people are finally believing, yes believing, and understanding and empathizing with, the experiences of people of color.

This last Sunday afternoon here in New Hartford, nearly 100 people gathered on the Pine Meadow Green to witness to their support for racial justice. And hundreds more expressed their affirmation by waving and with the honking of car horns as they drove by.

Yet, sadly, compassion is not something that comes naturally to everyone. David Rosen-gren, one of our Town Selectmen and an organizer of the event wrote the following to many of the participants:

“A number of people have asked why we would want to demonstrate here in an all white town, a consequence of which is that we do not experience much by way of racial tension or injustice. I've thought about that alot and my answer lies in the following. First, the problem we are facing is a *white problem, not a black problem*. Blacks are and have been the victims of that white problem for 400 years and we owe it to them, and not the other way around, to fix that problem. Not because we ourselves caused the problem (the cause and the perpetuation of the problem precedes us by centuries) but because we cannot stand by and do nothing about it. For if we do, we become complicit in perpetuating the problem -- through our deeds, or worse yet, through our silence.

My second response lies in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail:

. . . ‘I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.’”

When we are lacking in compassion we are only moved to support people and causes that affect us directly. So in order to have compassion, we first need to have a heart for other people and their suffering. It asks us to put ourselves in the position or situation of another and imagine what it would be like for us. It requires us to have a concern for the common good.

The dictionary defines compassion in this way: sorrow or the capacity to feel sorrow for another's suffering or misfortune; sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it. (Merriam-Webster)

The Latin root of the word, compassion, is “pati,” which means “to suffer.” The prefix, “com-,” means “with.” In other words, “to have compassion” means to “suffer with.”

Compassion should be distinguished from pity, which might imply an attitude of condescension. When we pity someone we could well have sympathy for them, but would not necessarily be motivated to action, including being present for them.

Pema Chodron, an American Tibetan Buddhist author and nun, wisely notes this:  
"Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity."  
(Pema Chodron, [The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times](#))

The twentieth century Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer and theologian, Henri Nouwen, acknowledges that it can be painful for us to enter into the suffering of someone else. He observes this:

"Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human."

This is easier said than done, since it is often more tempting to offer advice than to listen, or to flee from pain by changing the subject or insisting that our companion “cheer up.”

As Nouwen also writes:

"Let us not underestimate how hard it is to be compassionate. Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely, and broken. But this is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it."

Here is some blunt and straightforward advice that I found on Facebook:

“When someone is broken, don’t try to fix them. (You can’t); When someone is hurting, don’t attempt to take away their pain. (You cant.); Instead, love them by walking beside them in the hurt. (You can.) Because sometimes what people need is simply to know that they aren’t alone.”

Note that the dictionary defines compassion as the “sympathetic consciousness of another’s distress.” But also a desire to alleviate it. Yet finding a quick cure, or changing the subject, or trying to cheer someone up tends not to accomplish that. As a matter of fact, it might make the person suffering feel worse, since what he or she needs, at least initially, is to feel heard.

Allow me to leave you with one more quote, which offers us a simple reason for the importance of compassion, written by the 20th century British novelist, Doris Lessing: "Do you know what people really want? Everyone, I mean. Everybody in the world is thinking: I wish there was just one other person I could really talk to, who could really understand me, who'd be kind to me. That's what people really want, if they're telling the truth." (Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook)

In our gospel lesson this morning, we are told that Jesus went about the countryside teaching and healing. We may not be able to heal like Jesus, but healing begins when we offer others our loving presence and time to simply listen.

May we all find companions who regard us as fellow travelers through the joys, challenges and sorrows of this life and so listen patiently and hold space for us to share the things that weigh heavily on our hearts.

And in our encounters with everyone we meet, may we do likewise.

In the Compassionate Spirit of Christ we pray. Amen.

MUSICAL MEDITATION. *You’ve Got A Friend.* -Carol King, sung by James Taylor

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LfdBaFULBo>

PRAYER

God of great compassion, we thank you for your loving presence that enables us to open our hearts to you. We may not receive instant answers or miracles, or even receive the things we think we need.

But allow us to know that in the midst of what might seem like your distance or your silence, we are able to learn, to grow and to make our own way through our challenges and concerns.

We thank you for all of the people in our lives who have walked with us, have listened and have healed us with their caring presence and deeds.

Give us patience and an even deeper capacity for compassion.

In that spirit, we continue to suffer when we witness cruelty born of racism, and so we hold in our hearts all people of color especially those who have been disrespected, harassed and killed simply because of the color of their skin. We stand with them in their fight for respect and justice. Enable us to help to put an end to feelings of hatred and displays of violence.

We hold up before you

-all who are suffering from diseases of the body, mind and spirit.

-those who are preparing for medical procedures....

-those who care for the sick and the dying....

-those people facing death

-and all who have passed into your eternal care and for family and friends who mourn their loss.....

In our own lives, we bring to you now our joys and concerns....

All these things we offer, using the words of the prayer that Jesus taught us,

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.

#### OFFERING

Although we are not gathering in the sanctuary for worship on Sundays for the time being, the church continues to have expenses. So it would be most appreciated if pledges and offerings could be mailed to the church at P.O. Box 307, New Hartford, CT 06057. Thank you for your generosity.

CLOSING HYMN *Will You Let Me Be Your Servant* Tune: SERVANT SONG

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32jWTAIHxgE>

OUR COMMON COMMISSION

Let us now forth into the world in peace.  
Being of good courage.  
Holding fast to that which is good.  
Rendering to no one evil for evil.  
Strengthening the fainthearted.  
Supporting the weak.  
Helping the afflicted.  
Honoring all persons.  
Loving and serving the Lord,  
And rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Christ has no body now but yours  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours  
Yours are the eyes through which he moves compassion over the earth  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours  
So go forth to serve him by supporting everyone you meet, listening with an open heart  
and assuring them that they are not alone. (-Teresa of Avila, adapted)

POSTLUDE

*You'll Never Walk Alone*

-Rogers and Hammer-

stein

Wheaton Christian Grammar School Concert Choir, Virtual Spring Concert

2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjdbeAWEaeE>