



INDEPENDENCE, DEPENDENCE, INTERDEPENDENCE

July 5, 2020

North Congregational Church
New Hartford, Connecticut

WORSHIP FOR THE EIGHTEENTH TIME
THAT WE ARE NOT GATHERING IN OUR SANCTUARY
BECAUSE WE WISH TO HONOR THE NEED FOR PHYSICAL DISTANCING
IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS

.....

On the first Sunday of every month it is our tradition to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Since we cannot gather together, you are invited to receive it in your home. In our liturgy this morning, a liturgy is included for your use. In preparation, you are encouraged to create a simple altar for yourselves, perhaps light a candle, and set out some bread and wine or juice.

FOR YOUR MEDITATION

As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil.

- 1 Peter 2:16

.....

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.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and uniting God, on this weekend in which we celebrate the secular holiday of our nation's independence, we ask that you would forgive us for taking our freedom for granted. We confess that we have confused it with self-centeredness and self-indulgence. As we celebrate the gift of being able to think and act independently, we ask that you would make us mindful of our call to be members of the body of Christ, and hence of our connectedness and responsibility to all humanity and creation. Amen.

OPENING HYMN
AZMON

O For a World

Tune:

Riverside Church, New York

City

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w2LSAXiYRI>

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Ephesians 4: 1-6, 11-16

1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. 15 But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

John 15: 1, 4-5

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower.

4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

MORNING MEDITATION

Independence, Dependence, Interdependence

The Rev. Marcia

Lynn Cox

How independent are you?

On whom, if anyone, do you depend?

And who depends on you? When and for what kinds of things'?

No time has the issue of freedom and independence become more relevant than during this Covid 19 pandemic. We've all seen the photos of people crowded together on beaches, in restaurants, at political rallies... and yes...even in churches... without wearing masks. Although some deny the reality of the existence or danger of the virus, many people who refuse to wear them do so claiming the freedom that they think are guaranteed as citizens of the United States.

Recently I came across a Facebook conversation on site that I follow for caregivers of aging parents. A woman who has two parents living discovered that her father, who was out driving, went missing for eight hours, and she asked the group for suggestions for tracking devices that would allow her to know where he was at all times. The nearly universal responses encouraged her to not only take away his driver's license but his car keys as well, because it seemed that he was perhaps suffering from dementia. Not only was he a danger to himself, but others. The woman responded to each offer of advice by saying that she wasn't asking about that, but rather about tracking devices. Because she did not receive the answer she wanted, she left the conversation. The Facebook group then went on to discuss the fact that she seemed to be in denial about her father's condition and that she was being unbelievably selfish by not acknowledging the fact that by driving he could potentially harm not only himself but other people as well.

It is puzzling to me how many people don't understand the fact that freedom and independence involve responsibility to others.

How many times do we need to hear the advice of Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

(<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/05/dr-anthony-fauci-says-americans-who-dont-wear-masks-may-propagate-the-spread-of-infection.html>) . He strongly notes that it symbolizes

our respect and care for each other. (<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/05/27/fauci-wears-mask-as-symbol-of-good-behavior-283847>)

The author of a recent article in the Washington Post reminds us of our responsibilities to each other. She writes. “The people most at risk from those without masks are not the individuals themselves. The risk is highest for grocery workers in the store, those who are keeping America fed by stocking shelves, operating checkout registers and slicing deli meat. These front-line workers spend long hours in contact with hundreds and sometimes thousands of people; these interactions are indoors, where health experts say the coronavirus can most readily spread.

....While wearing a mask is not a political issue, it is a moral one. The choice and stakes are clear: the minor inconvenience of donning a mask vs. potentially threatening other people’s lives. The options are not equal on any scale of duty, honor, citizenship, or service to God and others. Amid a deadly viral pandemic, wearing a mask is the only responsible course of action....

Yes, we enjoy personal freedom, but we can also choose to do something better for the common good.”

(Karen Hughes, “I’ve watched in alarm as my fellow Republicans shun masks. It’s selfish.” July 1, 2020, [The Washington Post](#))

Social responsibility and mutual respect are primary issues when we are considering public safety and our understanding of the common good. But independence and dependence are interesting matters for us to consider in our personal lives as well.

Some of us greatly value our own independence and so don't want to ask much of other people.

Recently a colleague of mine bought a new clerical robe that had to be shortened. It was a special challenge, because it had a beautiful lace inset, so it couldn't just be hemmed up from the bottom, but had to be shortened in another way. After examining it, I knew how to do it. My friend didn't sew and so I told her that I would be her tailor.

“Oh no,” she said, “I don't want to impose on you.” This is a longtime friend, who has done many things for me. Yet, she did not want to “impose.”

On the other hand, in an issue of the [New Yorker](#) magazine several years ago, there was an article entitled “Spoiled Rotten.” Here the author reviewed several books about how the current generation of parents seems to have produced a generation of young people who are extremely dependent. (Parents: Tell me if this rings true or not for you.)

All of the books deal with helicopter parents, that is, parents who not only overly-supervise every aspect of their children's lives, but do all of the household chores. Perhaps when can excuse them, this year at least, when employment opportunities have significantly decreased, but the authors eight years ago wondered if this generation of children have acquired the skills necessary able to live on their own. (Elizabeth Kolbert, The New Yorker, July 2, 2012)

In my ministry it is often my privilege to speak with people who have been divorced or have lost loved ones to death. Whether the relationship was healthy or not, grief is inevitable. But I have discovered that people vary widely in terms of their ability, while honoring their deceased spouse, to begin new lives. This can be related to the degree to which they are independent or dependent, and upon whom they depend.

One day at a clergy gathering a colleague in ministry told some of us that has been doing ballroom dancing with his wife for a number of years. He explained a basic principle of this beautiful art. Even though you are dancing with someone, you can't lean on him (unless you are being lifted or swung around).

First of all you have to have good posture, but you also have to keep your balance and you do that by carrying yourself independently.

Only then can you dance with a partner, who is equally balanced and independent.

I often use this example when I'm counseling both men and women who are having a difficult time being alone after a marriage of many years.

We come into this world from God and we believe that it is to God to whom we will return. During the course of our lives, we are indeed blessed if we form relationships with other people and enjoy being a part of a family and a number of communities.

But no matter what we do, or how we spend our time, or whether we live alone or with other people, our relationship with God....our dependence on God, informs our understanding of how we see ourselves in relationship to other people. In theological terms, this means that each one of us has to be balanced and grounded in God. Only then can we enter into healthy relationships, that enable us to be both independent and dependent.

As we well know, thanks to technology, we are connected 24 hours a day, seven days a week to cell phones, pods and pads to our loved ones, to endless information and our to business and social lives. I wonder, like many of you, about the dangers of all of this free expressing on tweets, and e-mails or facebook pages. These communications surely save time, but they can both foster relationships and destroy them. As we've discovered with

things like cyber-bullying, it is easy to hurt people deeply when we are not engaged in face to face encounters or conversations.

We love our country, but we need to keep reminding ourselves that we live in a global village. Those of us who care about the environment know very well about all of the refuse, that is dumped into the ocean from all countries, including ours, and makes its way into the eco system. The animals of the sea mistake plastic for food and choke and die. To say nothing of the ways in which the things we discard destroys the ocean.

We have yet to see how not only how the current pandemic but also our nation's economic policies will affect us all...not only in our country but across the globe.

And we have seen, too, of how fast Information travels around the world. Recently the news and video of the murder of George Floyd has arouse international interest in the issue of racism. We can only hope that will lead to legislation and reforms which reflect our need for compassion and justice.

Although we have freedom and independence, we are still greatly interdependent.

As Christians, it is always good to be reminded are related to, and had a responsibility to, the common good, because it is from God that we acquire our grounding, our talents, and our purpose.

So as we gather around Christ's table, let us give thanks that we are members of the body of Christ and bound in love to one another and the world through him. AMEN.

HYMN OF PREPARATION *One Bread, One Body* Tune: ONE BREAD, ONE BODY

sung by John Michael Talbot

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FG9T8UmN6VY>

PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, we give thanks for the many wonderful things in our lives:

The beauty that surrounds us, family members, friends, and life's basic necessities.

We give thanks for the many things that being citizens of this nation affords us: a government whose task it is to provide for the common good, for the ability to elect our leaders and for the freedoms that we have been guaranteed: Freedom of speech. Freedom of worship. Freedom from want. Freedom from fear. Yet we look around and are forced to acknowledge that we have not lived up to these promises. So we pray that our leaders and we ourselves will make these freedoms possible for each and everyone of the residents of our country.

We are mindful, God of justice, for those who are unjustly oppressed or imprisoned.
And for those who are not granted a living wage for their labors.
God of peace, we hold up before you all who are in the midst of dangerous or violent situations.

Healing God, we hold in our hearts all who are suffering from diseases of the body, the mind and the spirit, especially.....

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

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

For those people facing death

For all who have passed into 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.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

OPENING WORDS

Brothers and sisters in Christ, although physically separated, we gather now as one body.

The table of bread and wine is set before us.

It is the table of company with Jesus.

And with all those who love him.

It is the table of communion with the earth in which Christ became incarnate.

So come to this table.

It is open to all of us who seek to follow Jesus.

Here we find food and drink for our soul's delight. Here we are not alone.

May we be nourished and recommitted to discipleship.

As we receive the sacrament, may we renew our ability to see the world and all its people and creatures through the eyes of Christ with hope, peace, love and joy as well as with empathy and compassion.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION AND THE SHARING OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP

And so we remember, on the night of his betrayal and death,

The bread bread, [*take bread*]

and after blessing it he broke it, [*break bread*]
gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body, broken for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.’”
Ministering to you in his name, we offer you this bread. [*We share the bread.*]
This is the bread of life. Take and eat. [*We eat the bread.*]

Then he took a cup, [*take cup*]
and after giving thanks he gave it to them, [*lift cup*]
saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’”
Ministering to you in his name, we offer you this cup. [*The juice/wine is shared,*]
This is cup of forgiveness and blessing. Take and drink. [*And we drink it.*]

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

For our vulnerability that is symbolized in the breaking of the bread, for your love that has been given to us in the pouring of the cup, we give you thanks, O God. May this sacrament remind us of our dependence on You. Assured that we are united through Christ, and related in love to the world you have created, send us out with courage and joy that we might become instruments of your healing, justice and peace. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

This Is My Song

Tune: FINLANDIA

First Plymouth Church, Lincoln, Nebraska

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-zsFOa-lQ4>

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.

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

May God give you grace never to weaken in your zeal to proclaim the gospel.

Grace to risk something big for something good,

Grace to remember that the world is too dangerous for anything but righteousness
and too small for anything but love.

So may God take your minds and think through them,

Take your lips and speak through them,

And take your hearts and set them on fire with the teachings and the spirit of Christ.

Amen.