

Sus UMC Next Worship

Remembering Our Baptism
as an Act of Hope and Resistance



**Sunday, January 5, 2020
4:00 pm**

Beaver Memorial UMC, Lewisburg
Church of Christ Uniting, Kingston
Grace UMC, Harrisburg
St. Paul's UMC, State College

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Host Pastor

OPENING PRAYER

Host Pastor

Holy God, we come to this place today from different places and different journeys. Some of us come because we long for a church that is truly welcoming and inclusive of all people. Some of us come because we feel a need to take a stand and do something about the injustice we see within the church. Some of us come with anger at the harm the church has done over the past decades. And so we come with varied and mixed emotions.

Regardless of how or why we've come, we seek Your presence among us in this hour; quiet our minds and stir our hearts that we may offer You our praise and worship. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

GREETING

Susquehanna UMC Next Team Member

As many of us watched General Conference 2019, it was a moment of clarity that what we were witnessing was not the church we knew and love and not the church we wanted to be part of. It was another moment of pain and sorrow for many of us. Out of that time of pain, multiple networks have emerged across US to help us move towards the church we know we can be and we feel God is calling us towards

- A church of passionate followers of Jesus, committed to a Wesleyan vision of faith and love lived out in personal piety and social holiness.
- A church with a robust, life-giving, Spirit-filled engagement with scripture; informed by tradition, experience and reason.
- A church that doesn't have to think alike in order to love alike.
- A church that seeks justice, loves kindness and walks humbly with God.
- A church that follows the movement of the Spirit as we reject the Traditional plan and affirm the sacred worth of LGBTQ persons, celebrate their gifts, affirm their full participation, and commit to being in ministry together with all people as we make new disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

- A joyful, Spirit-filled church of faith, hope, and love that bears witness in our communities and our world to God's restoration and renewal of all things.

UMC Next is a network of churches, laity, and pastors across the denomination united by their common hope and shared work for this kind of church. There have been two gatherings of the UMC Next network at Adam Hamilton's church in Kansas City, Church of the Resurrection and every Annual Conference has their own UMC Next team that is working independently around the 4 commitments of UMC Next you see in your bulletin.

The Susquehanna UMC Next Team is organizing its work around cultivating 3 Cs- Community, Conversation, and Collaboration. There are 4 ways you can stay connected with the work of Susquehanna UMC Next. Through our email marketing, through our website, through our public Facebook page, and through our private Facebook group. Information about each of these is included in your bulletin. Also included in your bulletin is some information about our card writing campaign and upcoming district gatherings.

You may have read the statement released by Council of Bishops on Friday announcing the signing of an agreement called The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation. It is described as "A diverse group of representatives from United Methodist advocacy groups with contrasting views and bishops from around the world has collaborated on a proposed agreement for the separation of The United Methodist Church that has the unanimous support of all the parties involved." The full statement and supporting document are available on the website UnitedMethodistBishops.org.

For today, our purpose to gather is not to brainstorm or figure out what to do next ... or even to begin to understand this breaking news from the bishops – we'll be doing that in our district gatherings. Today, as the traditional plan goes into effect, we simply wanted a time to worship – to be united in prayer, and to remember our baptisms in which we are all claimed as beloved children of God and called to resist evil, injustice and oppression. As we remember who we are and whose we are, we pray that we might feel hope that can come only from God.

One of the ways we will pray together is to share in a few sentences your story or your hopes on the post-it notes you received. You are invited to place them (indicate location) during the first hymn or during the anthem.

Would you now please stand and join in a call to worship?

* CALL TO WORSHIP

Susquehanna UMC Next Team Member

On this Epiphany Sunday,
we gather from around the Susquehanna Conference to pray for our church.

**We gather in several locations,
but join our hearts and voices during this time of worship.**

We come together, saddened that our church has chosen a path of exclusion.

**We come together, praying for a future where our church will not only welcome,
but will include all people in the life and ministry of our denomination.**

Our church says we have open hearts,

but has not always been very good at loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Our church says we have open minds,

but often expect people to think and act a certain way.

Our church says we have open doors,

**but have closed those doors to God's LGBTQ children
who are answering God's call to the ordained ministry.**

And so we gather for this time of worship and prayer,

trusting that God's all-inclusive, non-exclusive, abiding love will prevail.

* OPENING HYMN

"O God, In Your Love"

(Lyrics by Carolyn Gillette, used by permission, sung to tune: 'Immortal, Invisible')

O God, in Your love, You have made us unique:
in gifts and traditions, in service we seek.
In race and in culture and family design,
diverse are the branches in Jesus the Vine.

Lord Jesus, You came to bring God's love on earth;
You welcomed the outcasts and showed us our worth.
You reached out to people whom others despised,
You said all are precious in God's loving eyes.

O Christ, with Your welcome Your church feels unease:
we stand at closed doors tightly holding the keys.
Yet this is Your body, the church that You love;
O Lord, do You weep for Your church from above?

So may Your church welcome in loving accord
all people who want to serve Jesus our Lord.

O Spirit, unite us in Jesus the Son;
in mission and ministry, God, make us one.

(The people are then seated)

A reading from the Psalms.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night',

even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day,

for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

(pause)

The Word of the Lord.

TIME OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

Led by a participating pastor

Let us now turn to God in a time of prayer.

For the times that the church has treated people of color and women as if they were second class citizens, we pray: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

For the times that the church has told people they were of sacred worth, but also that they were incompatible with Christian teaching, we pray: Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

For the times that the church has stood in judgement on whether a person was worthy of God's call to ministry, we pray: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The psalmist reminds us that each and every one of us are wonderfully made. Our Hebrew scriptures teach us that we are made in the image of God. But these words from our Scriptures are often drowned out by the voices around us. So let us now remember and celebrate our identity in God.

**God, who made me in Your image,
teach me to love myself as You love me.**
**God, who made me in Your image,
allow me to show that image to the world.**
**God, who made me in Your image,
strengthen me to be the person You created me to be.**
**God, who made me in Your image,
help me to see Your image in all those I meet.**
**God, who made me in Your image,
encourage me to love others as You love them.**

The One who breathed life into our lungs continues to be with us. God, who has made us reflective of God's own image, has forgiven us all and made us new creations. Therefore, since our sins are forgiven, let us live in peace and love; honoring and upholding the dignity of all we meet, knowing we see reflections of God's image all around.
Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE LESSON

I Corinthians 12: 12-31

A reading from Paul's letter to the people of Corinth.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this.

But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

(pause)

The Word of the Lord.

ANTHEM

“Draw the Circle Wide”

Our epistle reading reminds us that each of us are part of the body of Christ ... and without one another we are a broken and unhealthy body.

It is time for the church to open our hearts, minds and doors so that the body of Christ can be whole and healthy once again. We are here this day because we are committed to drawing the circle wider and wider as we welcome and include all persons into the life and ministry of the church.

If you have not already brought your sticky note forward with your story or your hopes and dreams, please do so as the anthem is sung.

Please stand for the reading of the gospel.

A reading from the gospel of Luke.

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’

He said to them, ‘Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, “Doctor, cure yourself!” And you will say, “Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.” ’ And he said, ‘Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s home town. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’

When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

The Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

The gospel lesson that was just read was Jesus' "coming out" story. Every one of us in this sanctuary today have our own "coming out" story. When we are born and as we grow older, we are part of other people's stories, and we take on the identities and narratives that those people have for us.

In today's gospel, we find Jesus in his hometown, among his friends and neighbors, when he reads the Isaiah passage and proclaims that he's not just Joseph's son, but the fulfillment of the holy scriptures. The Spirit of God is upon him.

The act of growing up, finding our way in the world, and claiming our own story is our own "coming out" story. For many, this is a difficult journey because our stories were not always welcomed by those around us.

Today we celebrate that each of us are lovingly created in the image of God. Today we celebrate that the Spirit of God has been poured out on all people – and we mean all people – and has given us our own unique calling in Christ. We each have our own story, our own hopes and dreams for the church. During our next hymn, which we will remain seated as we sing, we will take some time to read the stories, hopes and dreams that you provided on the post-it notes earlier this evening. While these thoughts are very personal, we recognize that many of us have very similar stories, hopes and dreams. So if something you hear reflects your own experience or thoughts, we encourage you to stand as it is read.

(Music begins)

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.
This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight, visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

*At this point, a few of the post it notes are read, followed by the song chorus, acapella.
More notes are read, followed by another chorus, etc.
After all notes are read, the final verse is sung,
indicating everyone to stand for this last verse.*

Perfect submission, all is at rest; I in my Savior am happy and blest,
watching and waiting, looking above, filled with his goodness, lost in his love.
This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

* REMEMBRANCE OF OUR BAPTISMAL VOW

Led by Participating Pastor(s)

INTRODUCTION

Please stand, as you are able.

Sisters and brothers in Christ:
through the sacrament of baptism
God's Spirit has been poured out upon water,
water poured over and immersing us,
water that flows freely for all who will receive it,
water from the streams of God's saving power and justice,
water that brings hope to all who thirst for righteousness,
water that refreshes life, nurtures growth, and offers new birth.
Today we come to the waters,
to renew our commitments
in each other's presence
to Christ who has raised us,
the Spirit who has birthed us,
and the Creator who is making all things new.

RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

And so I ask you, will you turn away from the powers of sin and death?

**We renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness,
reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin!**

Will you let the Spirit use you as prophets to the powers that be?

**We accept the freedom and power God gives us
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression
In whatever forms they present themselves!**

(continued)

Will you proclaim the good news and live as disciples of Jesus Christ, his body on earth?

**We confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, put our whole trust in his grace,
and promise to serve him as our Lord,
in union with the church which Christ has opened to all people!**

Will you be living witnesses to the gospel, individually and together, wherever you are,
and in all that you do?

**We will remain faithful members of Christ's holy church
and serve as Christ's representatives in the world.**

Will you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old
and New Testaments?

**We affirm and teach the faith of the whole church
as we put our trust in God, the Father Almighty.**

in Jesus Christ, his only Son. and in the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

Almighty God, the life you birthed in us
by baptism into Jesus Christ will never die.
Your justice never fails.
Your mercy is everlasting.
Your healing river flows.
Your Spirit blows where you will.
We cannot stop you, God!
But sometimes we try.
We try to block the flow,
we redirect the winds of the Spirit,
or we walk so far away from the life-giving Stream
that we do not hear its sound, and we forget its power.
We parch ourselves. We are dry and thirsty, O God.
Come, refresh us!

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray together.

*As the people pray, the pastor offers gestures of calling upon the Holy Spirit
to come upon the people and the water.*

Come upon us, Holy Spirit!
Come upon these waters.
Let these waters be to us drops of your mercy.
Let these waters remind us of your righteousness and justice.
Let these waters renew in us the resurrection power of Jesus.
Let these waters nourish and strengthen us for the journey ahead.
Let these waters make us long for your coming reign.
Glory to You, Most Holy God.
Glory to You, Jesus Christ, our Savior.
Glory to You, Spirit stirring these waters.
Eternal God, One in Three and Three in One!
All glory is Yours, now and forever. Amen!

Please come forward as you feel led, place your hands in the water and receive a shell, a sign and symbol of your baptism, which you may take home with you. After you receive the shell there will be pastors standing by the water who are there to give you a blessing if you would like before you return to your seat. They will ask what name you would like to be called by and will speak the words over you that were spoken over Jesus at his baptism, that you are a beloved child of God.

As you return to your seat let us spend some time in prayer, giving thanks to our loving God for all of our blessings, and also remembering our church on this holy day. Pray that the light of Christ will shine upon the United Methodist Church throughout the world, that the Holy Scripture be revealed to us ever more fully, and that we might become the body of Christ where all people without restriction would be welcome and embraced and included in all aspects of the life and ministry of the church.

As the person comes forward, the pastors should ask what name they would like to be called by and then say "XXX, you are a beloved child of God".

TIME OF SILENT MEDITATION AND PRAYER FOR OUR CHURCH

Once everyone has come forward, a few moments of silence are observed before moving on.

* OUR RESPONSE

“We Will Send No One Away” (adapted from Meredith Bishoff)

HOST PASTOR:

Please stand, as you are able.

We have gathered here today because we believe that for too long the church has used race, gender and sexual orientation to exclude people from the life and ministry of the church. Sadly, this is nothing new. Even those closest to Jesus often tried to send people away.

Some Pharisees wanted to test Jesus. So they came up to him and asked if it was right for a man to divorce his wife. Jesus asked them, “What does the Law of Moses say about that?” They answered, “Moses allows a man to write out divorce papers and send his wife away.”

All: We will send no one away.

Some people brought their children to Jesus so that he could bless them by placing his hands on them. But his disciples told the people to stop bothering him. When Jesus saw this, he became angry and said, “Let the children come to me! Don’t try to stop them. People who are like these little children belong to the kingdom of God.

All: We will send no one away.

One day another large crowd gathered around Jesus. They had not brought along anything to eat. So Jesus called his disciples together and said, “I feel sorry for these people. They have been with me for three days, and they don’t have anything to eat. Some of them live a long way from here. If I send them away hungry, they might faint on their way home.”

All: We will send no one away.

A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.” Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

All: We will send no one away.

In the early church, many people wanted to send away the gentile Jesus-followers unless they changed who they were, but Peter explained that the Holy Spirit had included them as they were. “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

Like Peter who saw the fruits of the Spirit in people others excluded:

All: We will send no one away.

UMC Next Team Member:

We are called to follow the example of Jesus, who never sent anyone away. Jesus saw beyond the labels that were placed upon people by their culture, and embraced everyone as a beloved child of God. We are called to follow the example of Peter, who understood that he could not stand in God's way and bore witness to the new thing God was doing as the Spirit filled and included those who were previously considered outsiders.

As a community of faith, we value diversity and celebrate those differences as intentional acts of God's creation. We declare that we have seen the Spirit making the circle wider. In that the realm of God includes all persons, we commit to helping our church become a community of faith where people of all ages, races, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and family units are welcomed fully into the life and ministry of our congregations.

As we prepare to leave this place, let us join our voices as we share our 4 commitments of UMC Next.

We long to be passionate followers of Jesus Christ, committed to a Wesleyan vision of Christianity, anchored in scripture and informed by tradition, experience and reason as we live a life of personal piety and social holiness.

We commit to resist evil, injustice and oppression in all forms and toward all people and build a church which affirms the full participation of all ages, nations, races, classes, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities.

We reject the Traditional Plan approved at General Conference 2019 as inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ and will resist its implementation.

We will work to eliminate discriminatory language and the restrictions and penalties in the Discipline regarding LGBTQ persons. We affirm the sacred worth of LGBTQ persons, celebrate their gifts, and commit to being in ministry together.

* CLOSING HYMN

"Go, Tell It On the Mountain" (with new verses)

Intro to hymn by UMC Next Team member:

On this Epiphany Sunday, we remember the star whose light led the shepherds to find the newborn baby. That same star guided the Magi through their long and arduous journey to find the child Jesus so that they could worship him and offer their gifts.

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus is the light of the world. We are called not only to follow that light, but to also let our own lives be a reflection of that light in the world today.

Remember the words of John who said that the Light shines in the darkness and that the darkness will not overcome it.

So as we prepare to sing our closing hymn today, let us remember that each of us are called ... regardless of our race, age, ability, sexual orientation, or gender identity ... we are called to share the good news of God's great love for them wherever they may be; over the hills and everywhere!

(Music begins)

**Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.**

God's welcome is for everyone, and not just for a few;
with open hearts we'll share God's love in everything we do.

Let's celebrate diversity, expressing God's great love;
with open minds to bless and serve, with power from above.

We'll strive to be a family where God can use us all;
with open doors for everyone to celebrate their call.

* BLESSING

Host Pastor

Go with pride in who you are and whose you are.
Go knowing that love is stronger than hate, and hope more lasting than fear.
Go determined to live with the dignity that is yours as God's beloved.
Go committed to this holy struggle of liberation,
 joining that great cloud of witnesses who will not rest until peace and justice embrace,
 and love finds a hope in every human heart.
Alleluia. Amen.

* POSTLUDE