**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**May 8, 2016 Seventh Sunday of Easter**

**11:00 a.m.**

**Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor Nancy Mueller, Accompanist**

**Prelude**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

**I can feel His mighty power and His grace.**

**I can feel the brush of angels' wings, I see glory on each face.**

**Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.**

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**Call to Worship (please see bulletin)**

**Opening Prayer**

Breathe your Spirit upon us

as we gather to welcome Christ

with glad hearts and joyful voices.

Meet us here, we pray;

open our ears to hear you speaking

and our hearts to respond with joy.

Fashion us into a people of hope, and send us out

to proclaim what we have seen and heard:

In the name of Jesus, the Risen Everlasting Son of God. Amen.

**\*Opening Hymn**

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession (please see bulletin)**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Friends, in the name of the Jesus Christ, you and I are forgiven!
**Thanks be to God! Amen!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

 **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen, Amen.**

**Psalm 97:1-12 (please see bulletin)**

**Pastoral Prayer**

Prayers:

Edward Trujillo is at Northwest Hospital in Amarillo today (Eric's cousin)

Leo Naranjo

Wayne Huffman

EmmaLou Harding

Tom Anderson

Lou Sims

Thanksgiving for the Rummage Sale

O Lord, you hold the future of your people.
Trusting in your love, we lift up our dreams and hopes before you.
We pray for all who celebrate good news and hopes fulfilled, that they might see your love for them and for all people.
God of abundance, **Fill the earth with your joy.**
We pray for those who seek peace between people and nations, that they may know themselves as children of God.
God of abundance, **Fill the earth with your joy.**
We pray for those who experience injustice, and for those who stand with them, that you would set all things right.
God of abundance, **Fill the earth with your joy.**
We pray for all who suffer from illness, poverty, or worry, that you would pour out your blessings and heal your people.
God of abundance, **Fill the earth with your joy.**
We pray for all who weep and mourn, that you would give comfort and peace.
God of abundance, **Fill the earth with your joy.**
Now we lift our prayers to you in silence.

Let our prayers be a seed of your good news, and may we commit ourselves to the work of your joy. We pray in Jesus’ name, who sows life in our hearts, and we join in the prayer he taught us, saying: **…The Lord’s Prayer**

**Offering**

**Time Out for Teaching: Best Practices**

A few weeks ago, I inquired of the congregation what are signs you have seen of health and strength in this church? I got lots of answers. Here are the ones I can remember:

the welcoming character of this congregation,

a number of new members have joined in the past year,

"vitality" of your pastor

rebirth of Sunday School here

a willingness to try new ideas

What were some others you have thought of since then?

I would like to ask you another question now – of all these things, which top three do you feel are most important, or have the most potential to develop further?

**Hymn**

**Prayer for Illumination**

Lord of light, shine your light on us now. As you spoke your word of creation in the beginning, speak your creative word to us now. As you gave us your word through prophets and teachers, give us your word in our worship this day. As you yourself read the scroll and claimed its promises, read your word into our hearts and claim us with your promises. Amen.

**Acts 16:16-34**

16One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. 17While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation." 18She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

19But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. 20When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews 21and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe." 22The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. 23After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. 24Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. 27When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. 28But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." 29The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. 34He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

**John 17:20-26**

20"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

25"Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. 26I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

**Sermon An Open Door Policy Rev. Amy Pospichal**

 Picture a young college graduate leaving home for the first time. Brought up with good values in a supportive family, a good education, heavily involved with a church. And now is the time for this college grad to leave home, move out of state for her first real job. The bags are packed, a few belongings stuffed into the car. Standing in the driveway, Mom and Dad have the camera out to take pictures, everyone hugs and kisses their kid for the last time in who knows how long. The young adult is eager to hit the road. But Mom and Dad aren't so eager, and they fight back tears until the pictures have been taken. Dad reminds her how to change the tires and to call and let them know how it's going. Mom reminds her child to eat right, drive safely, be careful and that there will always be a place to stay here at home. Then they stand there, waving as the young graduate drives off out of sight.

 That graduate was me. I had no idea just how hard it was for my mother and father to let me drive all the way to Texas, at the young and tender age of 22. I suppose a constant theme of parenting involves having the wisdom to know how to hold on and how to let go. Particularly when the child is at a new stage of life and it is time to leave the nest. But even in those smaller, day to day things that kids get themselves into, parents often have to discern what to allow, what not, how much to fence their kids off from danger, and what their kids need to experience for themselves. I don't have to tell you parents, but such discernment isn't easy, and many parents worry about the mistakes they have made along the way. In my opinion, it is far better to worry about it, than to be a parent who doesn't care enough to worry at least a little. Fortunately, as author Jill Churchill writes, "There is no way to be a perfect mother, but a million ways to be a good one." Thank goodness for that.

The Church is always in a state of discernment similar to a parent. How much should we build up walls around ourselves full of dogma to avoid the danger of impurity, how much should we go out there and be a part of the world, in order to learn about it? How do we do this, especially with people who are learning and developing into disciples of Jesus Christ? For centuries, even as far back as the third century, Christians have described the Church as a mother to believers. St. Cyprian said, "No one can have God as Father if they don't have the Church as Mother." Just as earthly moms are not perfect in every way, neither is the Church Mother, but still somehow with God's help most churches nourishes us with what we need - connections and relationship. God's message of salvation. The Church raises us up in a nest of faith. And no matter how many times we fall out of the nest, like many mothers, the Church welcomes us back in. We have an open door policy built out of grace.

In Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, we see a door opened to the future of the Church. Jesus prays for the relationship of people to His Father to continue after He is gone. John's gospel provides us wondrous and insightful moment of Jesus in prayer, revealing Jesus artfully doing the things that all the rest of us struggle with – holding on and letting go. He entrusts His disciples to God's care, and prays for their continuation of what was begun through him. I suppose it is in a way a sort of prediction of Pentecost, the birth of the Church, which happens after Jesus' ascension. He prays for the future of the Church, for the unity of those who believed Jesus, and those will believe in Him in the future: "I ask not only on behalf of these," He says, "but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one."

This prayer is, therefore, not just a prayer for Jesus' disciples in that time. It is a prayer for all time, a prayer that continues to cover all the Church, even today. It is a prayer for believers to pass on our faith to others. And what it means for you today is that you can be assured that Jesus has prayed for you, before you were even born, prays for those who come to believe through you. He prays for us to all find unity in the Body of Christ, the Church universal, Mother of all believers. It means we, even those of us who are not presently moms or dads, are invited to participate in God's parenting of humanity.

In our baptismal vows, the church vows to parent new members and newly baptized children. In other denominations, there are designated godparents to the newly baptized. In our church, everyone becomes a godparent to the newly baptized and new members. It means we become family to one another. All of us, even if we have never given birth to a child, have opportunities to nurture one another. To nurture one another in faith includes teaching of Scripture and equipping us all for service, as well as demonstrating the love of God. And that could involve baking cookies, holding someone's hand, driving them to the doctor, and more.

So, Friends, perhaps you are one of those parents who worry about the mistakes you made raising your children. Maybe you are a parent who suffers through Mothers' Day filled with regret. Mothers' Day could be a day of pain and grief, instead of fun. Or maybe you have never been a parent, and regret that it never happened to you. The Good News is, you have opportunities right here in Christ's Church, to see yourself as a parent to God's people. Parenting is a sacred calling. Jesus has opened the door to God's future, in which you have a part to play. Thanks be to God for the open door. Enter in, be nurtured here, and then nurture someone else. You are welcome home at any time. Amen.

**\*Closing Hymn**

**\*Benediction**