**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, February 16, 2020 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor Marjorie McKenzie, Accompanist**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

Friends, be strong and do not fear, for we are in the presence of God.  
**Waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.**  
The burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.  
**God brings forth abundance where before there was scarcity.**  
There is nothing that is impossible with God.  
**We are gathered to share God’s blessings with one another.**  
Come, let us worship God!

**Prayer of the Day**

God of Creation,  
all of the world proclaims your praise,  
from the highest heavens to the deepest recesses of the sea.  
Make our voices true and faithful  
as we join the voices of all of creation to sing your praise. **Amen**.

**\*Opening Hymn RH#215 “Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts”**

**Call to Confession**

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In humility and faith let us confess our sin to God.

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

**God of Mercy and Steadfast Love,  
You gave us our tongues that we may speaks words of love, wisdom, and grace.  
But often our tongues are the vehicles of other things:  
instead of love, hatred,  
instead of wisdom, foolishness,  
instead of grace, rage.  
Like a small fire that sets a forest ablaze,  
too often a word can set forth a flood of fear and anger.  
Help us use our tongues to start other things:  
kindness, compassion, and courage.  
In the name of your son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. May the God of mercy, who forgives you all your sins,

strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.

I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

**Alleluia! 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.**

**Responsive Reading Psalm 119:1-8**

Happy are those whose way is blameless,  
who walk in the law of the LORD.  
**Happy are those who keep his decrees,  
who seek him with their whole heart,  
who also do no wrong,  
but walk in his ways.**You have commanded your precepts  
to be kept diligently.  
**O that my ways may be steadfast  
in keeping your statutes!**Then I shall not be put to shame,  
having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.  
**I will praise you with an upright heart,  
when I learn your righteous ordinances.**I will observe your statutes;  
do not utterly forsake me.

**Hymn RH#470 “We Would be Building”**

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**\*Doxology Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**\*Dedication of the Offering**

**\*Congregational Response We give Thee but Thine own. Whatever the gift may be;**

**All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee. Amen**

**Prayers of the People**

Living and Holy God, we give you thanks for your word of life

and the gift of your invitation to know and serve you in Jesus Christ.

Hear our prayers, in the name of Christ, the holy and blameless one.

We pray for those who seek you,

who work to keep your blessed way.

Teach them in the quiet and gentle voice of the heart.

We pray for those who teach and those who learn,

that their work together would reveal the love you have for all your people.

We pray for all whose way falters, due to sin, weakness, or despair.

Strengthen your people, restore the broken, and rescue the lost.

We pray for those who are excluded or put to shame,

that they would be strengthened by the gift of your word

and the presence of your church.

We pray for all who are sick, struggling, grieving, or worried,

that they might know your healing

and delight to praise you with upright hearts.

We pray for your will to be done,

and we offer ourselves to your service,

in Jesus’ name, saying together:

*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Time out for Teaching “Blessings and Curses”**

I would like to remind you of the wisdom imparted to us from our Old Testament reading this morning. It comes from Deuteronomy 30.

Let’s talk about Deuteronomy for a moment. If you lined Deuteronomy up alongside Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, you might see that all three of these books have a lot in common. Exodus, however, tells more straightforwardly the story of the journey of the Hebrews, with the help of Moses, Miriam and Aaron, and their release from Egypt to the border of the Promised Land. It contains the 10 commandments and tells how God formed them into a nation.

Leviticus gets far deep into the holiness of God’s people, and details hundreds of laws and commandments to teach them how to maintain that holiness.

Numbers reads a great deal like Exodus, but it does it from a different point of view, much of it about the time spent in the wilderness. It’s also a collection of additional stories of the Israelites in the wilderness.

Lastly, Deuteronomy – which means in Greek “second law” – retells many stories and relates many of God’s Law in terms that are easier for people to understand. It reads a lot more like a teaching book, telling us what to do and how to do it. I often think of Deuteronomy as like the primer or elementary school-level book for young believers. It is the book which teaches us “right from wrong,” and what happens when we choose right from wrong.

This morning’s reading says there are “blessings and curses” associated with our choices in life.

**Prayer for Illumination**

Overwhelm us with your Spirit, O God, that the words we hear will speak to our hearts as your Word, made known to us in Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

**Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

15See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. 16If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. 17But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, 18I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. 19I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, 20loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

**1 Corinthians 3:1-9**

3And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, 3for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? 4For when one says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not merely human?

5What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. 6I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. 9For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.

**Gospel** **Matthew 5:21-37**

21“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ 22But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. 23So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. 25Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. 26Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

27“You have heard that it was said, ‘you shall not commit adultery.’ 28But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

31“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ 34But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”

**Sermon: “The Unfinished Symphony“ Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Composer Franz Schubert started the famous “Unfinished Symphony” No. 8 when he was just 25 years old. He only wrote two movements for it and just a little bit more of another movement. Historians have marveled at its complexity for such a young man. It is vastly different from the works of Schubert’s contemporary, Ludwig Beethoven.

Beethoven’s symphonies were known for their passion, triumphalism and a bit of nationalistic celebrations of heroes and wars. Schubert’s works were more lyrical, ethereal, poetic, playing around with timing and tone. Writer Tom Service called the Unfinished Symphony ghostly and dreamlike. Musicologists have debated whether Schubert’s style was influenced by his recent diagnosis of the dreaded syphilis. It’s possible that at the young age of 25 his disease sent him down a darker and sadder path which came out in his music. We may never know why he didn’t finish it. Perhaps he was too ill to pick it up and finish it.

I wonder whether the young Schubert realized he had bitten off more than he could chew. Maybe it was so far ahead of his time he wasn’t exactly sure how to finish it.

Unfinished work is frustrating, or even depressing. It can produce anxiety for us when it stares us in the face. That’s overwhelming enough to just abandon a project. Or – in our anxiety we grasp at straws, looking for a way to fix the problem, when patient trust is really the answer.

The hymn we just sang, “We Would Be Building,” sings about that feeling of being unfinished. It sings of the structures, now crumbling, that we would be building. It remarks on how these things are just what we do, even though they are inadequate, as we await God’s full reign on earth. It’s tempting to “fill in the blanks” of where we and our works are inadequate, except even then whatever answers we come up with tend to also be inadequate or incomplete.

I imagine that the Corinthians were grasping at straws to make up for where they felt inadequate as God’s “work in progress.” Paul, Apollos and others had visited them, taught them, and then left them. There were many unanswered questions and probably a sense of unfinished business. They were being built into God’s Kingdom, a house not made by human hands. But instead of trusting the process of learning and growing, they had become a house divided over whom they called their spiritual leader. Paul considers them to be spiritually immature still – “not yet ready for solid food.” They were much like children. They were new to this knowledge about the cross and what it means to live on grace.

It is a well-documented fact about young children that they are innocent yet self-centered. Innocent and pure – yet when tragedy strikes or some other bad thing without an easy explanation, children will come up with some notion that somehow its their fault, when no one provides them with the right information. Classic example is when there is a divorce, the child grieves that and if no one tells her that it is mommy and daddy’s problem not hers, she might construe an explanation which places the child herself at fault.

Remaining faithful when we cannot see clearly is exactly the point of our life in Christ, and is most challenged when we face the hardest things in our lives. It calls for us to trust God’s process and refrain from “filling in the blanks,” when we really don’t know the answers. We God’s work in progress. Paul sets things straight: “5What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. 6I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ….For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

To be fair to them, like children who are still growing up, the Corinthians were trying to make sense of the oddity of the grace of Jesus Christ. But the greatest part of faith is the mystery, the unfinished or open-ended nature of belonging to God, that we live by faith and we do not always see perfectly clearly. Paul tells them later in his letter, “we see through a glass darkly, but one day shall see face to face…”

As we live in faith, we grow in faith. God offers us all an open-ended invitation to journey further with Him through life, as we trip and fall all along the way. God’s symphony only seems unfinished, but it is one He shall complete one day. Thanks be to God! Amen.

**\*Closing Hymn RH#339 “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah”**

**\*Benediction and Response “Amen, Amen, Amen**

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

Potluck Supper is today after worship!

**Please,**

Pray for peace in the Middle East, including Iraq and Afghanistan

Pray for a safe return of daughters and sons from combat

Pray for our global community and those in the midst of disaster

Pray for America and her enemies, that all would seek peace!

Pray for all the people and leaders in our local community

Pray for those who are seeking a deeper spiritual life.

Pray for all first responders

Pray for our church, national and local

Pray for our Presbytery and our pastor

**PRAYER REQUESTS FOR COMFORT AND HEALING**

Shay – requested by Julie Sursa

Jenna Morris, knee problems

Jim Enriquez & family - medical problems

Emma Lowther, Lou Sims’ great niece – ongoing heart trouble

Reagan Kenyon - more health problems

Gloria (Teresa Gallegos-Brake’s sister) – still having health problems

Sharon McCauley – awaiting surgery

Gene Kelly (Friend of Schusters’) – leaky heart valve

Ruth Johnson – physical problems

Cheryl Brewer – cancer hospice

Karen Foster – chemo for cancer

Sonia (Betty Faye’s daughter) recovering from stroke

Stacie (Glenda’s friend) – medical problems

Gracie Whitson – still recovering

Glenda Coles – healing after surgery

Sharon Huffman – continued health problems

Tom Anderson – health concerns

Sheila Martinez – Heart Trouble, diabetes, vision problems

Connor (grandson of the Bonds) – at sea in the Navy

Misty Tompkins – stiff person syndrome

Levi Mericle – thyroid cancer

Ida Macias – broken femur