**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**January 23, 2022 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**RH 141 O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing**

**RH 272 Just As I Am, Without One Plea**

**BH 322 Spirit of the Living God (Prayer for Illumination)**

**RH 332 Live into Hope**

**Call to Worship**

Let’s gather…  
to catch a glimpse of God’s vision for our lives and all of creation;  
**to witness the presence of Christ in this place and in one another;**to feel the Spirit of God moving around us, among us, and within us!  
**We are drawn together as a community**to give thanks, to be renewed, and to share our lives.  
**So let’s be drawn together now to worship God!**

**Opening Prayer**

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.  As your disciples, we gather around your word, in your name.  Amen.

**Call to Confession**

Let us confess our sins,  
our actions and our inactions,  
that are contrary to the kingdom of the newborn King.

**Confession (Responsive)**You have knit us together, your body,  
**and we confess that sometimes we are busy pulling out the stitches,**  
**trying to go our own way, heedless of the needs of other members.**  
You have made us one through your Spirit,  
**and we confess that we sometimes value our individualism over your call.**  
You remind us that if we were all the same, there could be no body,  
**and we confess that might be easier for us, even if it is not your will.**  
You call us to work together, suffer together, rejoice together, and to follow your most excellent way.  
**But the way of love is hard work. Cleanse us of our selfish desires and our arrogance, and fill us with your vision of justice, peace, and harmony, for we, though many, are one body. We ask this in the power of your one Spirit.***~silence~* **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**God does not call us to wallow in our brokenness—instead, we confess and know God’s healing, then move forward into God’s call. Each of our bodies, as well as Christ’s body, the Church, is a place we can experience God’s grace and power.

Friends, believe and live this good news:

**In Jesus Christ, we 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 19 please refer to reading #4, p 471, back of Red Hymnal**

**Prayers of the People**

You spoke long ago  
of dreams you had  
for creation,  
of hopes you offer  
to all your children,  
of love which will  
never, ever end.  
We rejoice this day in you,  
Majesty on high!

You left the right hand of God  
to come and take ours  
to lead us back home.  
You brought life into  
the valleys of our death.  
You carried the Light  
into the shadows of the world.  
We rejoice this day in you, dear Jesus Christ.

This day we raise our prayers of hope and thanksgiving for your gentle keeping, out loud and then in silence…

You teach us new songs  
when the old ones fade.  
You anoint us with the oil  
of Christmas joy.  
You make us heirs  
of Christ’s faithfulness.  
We rejoice this day in you,  
Spirit of grace.

We rejoice in you this day,  
God in Community, Holy in One,  
as we pray as we are taught, saying,  
Our Father . . .

**Offering**

**Prayer for Illumination BH 322 Spirit of the Living God**

**Time out for Teaching: “The Deal with Nehemiah”**

Today we will hear a story about Ezra, as written by the prophet Nehemiah. The story tells us of a moment in front of the “Water Gate” in Jerusalem. The people of Israel had returned home from being in exile in Babylon.

Their religious home was destroyed and they had to rebuild it. It was the beautiful Temple in Jerusalem. But they were still scared. They didn’t know what God might think of them, because they thought God was angry at them and had let their Temple be destroyed.

So, because they weren’t too sure, they decided to have a very important ritual. They dedicated the new Temple. But by doing this, they were also re-dedicating themselves to God.

How do we re-dedicate ourselves to God? How long has it been for you?

Repentance…confession of sins…prayer…worship

**Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10**

1all the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel. 2Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. 3He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

5And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

8So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

9And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. 10Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

**1 Corinthians 12:12-31a**

12For 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. 13For 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.

14Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15If the foot would 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. 16And if the ear would 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. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21The 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." 22On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and 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; 24whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

27Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31But strive for the greater gifts.

**Gospel Luke 4:14-21**

14Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

16When 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, 17and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18"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, 19to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." 20And 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. 21Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

**Sermon “Painful Prophecy” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

We have just heard about 2 people reading from ancient scrolls. Jesus reads from Isaiah in the synagogue, where he makes a very powerful announcement, that upon his reading and presence there, God’s plan is now being fulfilled. What a bold announcement! The people eventually drive him out, for it seems they believe him dangerous. The other scroll is read by Ezra, Temple priest, who – after the Israelites have come home from Exile in Babylon – is called upon to rededicate the newly-built Temple in Jerusalem. The Israelites had been gone for a long time. While they were away, they grieved the fact that Babylonians had destroyed God’s Holy Temple. It was a demonstration of power and domination in warfare. They took many Israelites away and resettled them in Babylon. Psalm 137 sings about that devastation:

1 By the rivers of Babylon—  
    there we sat down and there we wept  
    when we remembered Zion.  
**2**On the willows there  
    we hung up our harps.  
**3**For there our captors  
    asked us for songs,  
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,  
    “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

**4**How could we sing the Lord’s song  
    in a foreign land?  
**5**If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
    let my right hand wither!  
**6**Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,  
    if I do not remember you,  
if I do not set Jerusalem  
    above my highest joy.

**7**Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites  
    the day of Jerusalem’s fall,  
how they said, “Tear it down! Tear it down!  
    Down to its foundations!”  
**8**O daughter Babylon, you devastator![[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+137&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-16231b)]  
    Happy shall they be who pay you back  
    what you have done to us!  
**9**Happy shall they be who take your little ones  
    and dash them against the rock!

Psalm 137 is a song of despair giving way to the desire for vengeance. Who can come back from such tragedy? The place they had always held so precious and untouchable, not only had been touched, but toppled, down to its foundations! The center of their universe, the place where they had hoped to always expect God, was changed forever. The Temple was their connection between heaven and earth, but it was no more.

When the Lord allowed them to return home to Zion, they were fearful. For the Israelites believed that the Babylonian invasion was God’s judgment on them for unwise choices, for being ruled by kings who were more interested in their own politics. They could think of many possible reasons for why God would allow this devastation to happen. The Temple was their place to feel God, to get God’s approval, to see their sins wash away with the blood of animals. So, when the Temple was destroyed, this was taken as a painful prophecy, a suggesting that they could be at fault. When things get broken, we can also be broken.

But was it really their fault for the invasion? Was it the fault of the children who were violently murdered? I don’t think so. Some have placed the blame on the leaders, whose political alliances left them open to invasion. The Assyrians already took advantage of this fact a few hundred years earlier. But the prophets reminded the Israelites that they were also engaged in unethical living advantage of one another in the marketplaces.

I heard an expression recently that makes sense: “Hurt people hurt people.” It refers to our own brokenness inside – whatever pain and suffering in us that weakens our resolve or ability to see the differences between right and wrong. Hurt people hurt people reminds us that our brokenness and suffering can hurt others. Sin can be contagious. Our anxieties, our depression, our addiction to sin and evil, our self-centered desires, our unhealthy or unsafe habits… can so easily hurt others, as we feel our own hurt. When we are broken or hurt, it takes a lot to look at ourselves, and see how our hurt, hurts others.

In a grief counseling book I read recently (Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, Third Edition by J. William Worden), it even cautions the counselor, the pastor or therapist: “The counselor who has lost a spouse, through death or divorce, and for whom the loss is very recent, will find it difficult, if not impossible, to work with a person who has sustained a similar loss.” This means that even professionals are broken, risk causing needless harm to those whom they are meant to help. Hurt can be contagious. No wonder the Israelites feared returning to Jerusalem, for they feared God’s rejection forever. Even in their repentance, they were still lost in their own hopelessness, because they were afraid to presume themselves worthy of starting over.

But they had no other choice. They were back in the Pit, that terrible metaphorical hole in the ground, from which they could never get out without God’s helping hand from above. The only way was to start was by reaching up and out. They built a new Temple of their own volition. This time, it was not like when David told God, “You need a house.” This time, they really needed God, and at the risk of God’s rejection, they reached out for God anyway. Then they solemnly dedicated the New Temple with Scripture, prayer and in the presence of many witnesses. It was more than a rededication of a building. It was a rededication of their hearts.

Jesus reminds his audience of this as He opened the scroll and read from it, asserting God’s plan into that synagogue. The people did not like his approach. Maybe they heard Isaiah as painful prophecy. The Word of God stung with truth and promise. Maybe instead of an instant healing, it hit them more like a dab of rubbing alcohol as it touches a wound. Sometimes God’s Word might shock us when He cleanses us. But it is good for us.

Painful prophecy is God’s gift, even though it stings. But it is good, for it lets us know when we need God most. Let us try to be like Nehemiah’s Israelites, let us also bravely face God in hope, for we also have the grace of Jesus Christ to assist us in hope. No matter where in exile you may be. We have hope and therefore courage. Amen.

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Amy (Glenna Gray’s daughter) chronic medical issues  
Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters  
Brian Sims - hospitalized with COVID (brother-in-law of Laro Sims, Marge's daughter)  
Elmer Schuster - leg pain  
Fay Birch – stage 4 cancer  
Glenda Coles – bad shoulder pain, praying for surgery  
Jenna Morris – moved to Clovis for her new job  
Kevin Mueller - grief both for his father and his uncle  
Lucille Andrada's daughter and her family - COVID  
Lucy Jasper – Alzheimers/Dementia  
Misty Tompkins and her family – stiff person syndrome, seeking experimental program  
Paige Christian - Linda's niece, 7 mos pregnant and COVID positive  
Paul Estrada - for encouragement  
People seeking jobs, and people seeking employees  
Ruth Johnson – for general health  
Ryan Pottenger's dad (COVID)  
Ryan's Grandpa, Francis - for comfort and care  
Sarah Hittson's daughter Marie - surgery  
Schools, students, teachers and families  
Scott Holtz - on life support in AZ (a friend of Amy’s)  
Sharon and Wayne Huffman – general health  
Shay – Julie Sursa’s daughter  
Susie – still seeking a car, planning for EMS school  
Tammy Lucero - thanksgiving that she completed a course of cancer treatment and may she be healed  
Tommy Morris – for health and strength  
Travelers  
Ty Gresham – kidney failure

Tyler (former student of Emily's) and his wife at loss of their infant son   
All those suffering from COVID19

**Announcements:**

**Congregational Meeting Date** will be announced as soon as our Annual Report is finished and distributed to the congregation.

**Bible Study** continues on Wednesdays at 5:15PM. We are looking at the lectionary readings for the upcoming Sundays. No pressure to study ahead, just drop in!