**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, June 14, 2020 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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

**RH 496 Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun**

**RH 239 Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove**

**RH 507 Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life (vv 1-4)**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

**Call to Confession**

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

**Assurance of Pardon**

Friends, live and believe this good news:

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

Holy One, in your love and mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Holy One, Spark of Life,  
creation was envisioned by you and is sustained by you;  
in gratitude we pray for the world:  
that its riches and resources be used responsibly and fairly;  
that its rulers and leaders may govern with justice, compassion and humility;  
that humankind may live with understanding and respect,  
noticing what unites us;  
In your love and mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Holy One, Prophet of Love,  
you lived among us to teach us – to show us – how to love;  
in humility we pray for siblings around the globe:  
for those dehumanized by their struggle for existence, may we listen;  
for those overshadowed by the constancy of death, may we notice;  
for those besieged by fear, anger and relentless peril, may we show up;  
for those ensnared by systems beyond their control, may we demand change.  
In your love and mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy One, Breath of Being,  
you are here – in this very moment – as constant presence and insistent voice;  
in gratitude we pray…with boldness we pray:  
inundate the world with humanity,  
overwhelm the world with truth,  
flood the world with kindness,  
upset our indifference,  
accelerate our action,  
fortify our resolve,  
compel us to authentic discipleship  
that nurtures creation, embodies love and breathes life.  
In your love and mercy, **hear our prayer.**

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: God’s Good Humor**

I will always remember my pastor in Virginia, at the church of my youth. She is now retired. I forgot the occasion, but for some reason I remember a bunch of church members, including the youth group, were playing Bible Charades. Then it came up to by our pastor’s turn at it. She began hopping around with her hands pointing downward, knees pointing out. I thought she was a frog. It was the funniest thing I had ever seen any pastor do. No one could figure out what she was acting out. Then we learned that she was pretending to be the Virgin Mary!

In our culture, laughter and smiles are used for many different things. Sometimes we do it because we are uncomfortable in a situation. But usually they are good for what ails us. What are some ways that we use laughter and smiling?

Sarah laughs in today’s story from Genesis. She and Abraham have just been told by the mysterious strangers at the Oaks of Mamre that they will eventually have a child. Why did she laugh? We are told in the story that “it had ceased to be with her after the manner of women,” which is a modest way of saying that cannot have children anymore. She was beyond the age. Maybe she was just unable to believe it. Or that she was uncomfortable with the concept. Or at this point in life, after traveling with Abraham and the Lord of Israel, she figured she’d already seen everything.

But after the promise of God had been fulfilled, they named him Isaac, which means “He will laugh.” And she announces that Isaac is going to be the reminder that everyone can laugh. If she could laugh and still be given this gift, then so can everyone. Isn’t that beautiful thing?

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Second Reading Romans 5:1-8**

1Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,2through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.3And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,4and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,5and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

6For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.7Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person-though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die.8But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

**Gospel Matthew 9:35-10:8**

35Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness.36When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.37Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;38therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

10:1Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.2These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John;3Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;4Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

5These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans,6but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.7As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'8Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

**Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7**

1The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.2He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground.3He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant.4Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.5Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on-since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."6And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes."7Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it.8Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

9They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent."10Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him.11Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.12So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?"13The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'14Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son."15But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

1The LORD dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as he had promised.2Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him.3Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him.4And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.5Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.6Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."7And she said, "Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

**Sermon: “She Laughed” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

The actor and director, Woody Allen once said, “Do you know how to make God laugh? Tell him your plans.” I think I get it. It’s a joke. It reminds us of God’s all-powerful, sovereign rule over time and space, over all this Universe, and we think our plans are sometimes bigger than His. Or if we forget that God has a bigger plan, including us all, a plan that is indeed the fulfillment of all we need. But if God has a sense of humor, then we surely have been able to make God laugh, with all of our human antics. I figure that since God is our parent, God takes pleasure in us. Laughter is a holy gift. I think it is one of the ways we have been made in God’s image. Laughter is a gift to us all when we have to break the tension, or let someone know everything is going to be all right. Laughter even just erupts from nothing, even when the funny bone gets tickled and we don’t know how!

But when told in her twilight years that she would be with child, that must have tickled Sarah in a slightly different way. It sounded like a joke. Maybe even a cruel joke at first. After all, we are told, “It had ceased to be with her after the manner of women…” Also sort of funny sounding to us…A modest way of saying she was no longer able to have children.

The usual way of things was you get married. You have a baby. You have some more. If you have a boy, he eventually will take over all the inheritance, divide that inheritance with any of the younger siblings, take care of you in their old age, and then carry on with the family name and property. Lots of responsibility is placed on the oldest son in a family. Sarah and Abraham had been together all their adult lives. For all those years together but still felt stuck in 2nd gear. They needed a child for life to go on as normal.

Yet, life was not completely “normal” for them anyway. They were Mesopotamians wandering in a foreign land, and who should be their closest fellow traveler? The Lord of Israel. The Lord had been traveling with Abraham and Sarah, even though they were foreigners to Israel. And, maybe all those years of traveling the desert together made it easier for them to want to welcome the strangers who came to them for hospitality. It was a sacred custom in the desert to welcome strangers, offer them food, drink, a rest and maybe a little wash.

It was not natural for families, to not know for so many years who would carry forth the family when Abraham and Sarah would each be unable to do so anymore. This is not just about the God who saves the lost and downcast. It is about the God who steps in to provide a way forward for His people. The God who, when His people see no way forward, makes a new way. God was faithful to Abraham and is also to us.

God sure has a funny sense of humor. God loves us and did the most preposterous thing to die for us on a cross. So God also could give two people a child when they are already so old. As many of you know, the pain of wanting a child, is a deep one. There is a point during one’s life when one begins to accept facts. Abraham and Sarah had lived their lives long enough that maybe they began to accept the fact. They probably had expected at that point in their lives that they’d die childless.

It could have been that their loneliness moved them to welcome those three traveling strangers and insist on giving them rest and refreshment. Maybe after a while, you find other ways to be a “mom” to others. We evolve to adjust our expectations of life, and Abraham and Sarah probably had done that too. So, when Sarah heard the news, she laughed.

Sarah, in her old age, laughed. When she heard the most ridiculous thing – that she would bear a son – this made her laugh. I would probably laugh too.

Abraham and Sarah were late bloomers, thanks to God. Very late bloomers! Much too old in our own minds for the stresses and challenges of childbirth – let alone raising the kid. Imagine when Isaac becomes a teenager! But this story is not just about what’s in our own minds. It’s about what God can and wills to do. Hope springs forth, even from what appears to our eyes as death. Something new happens, with God’s power, even when we think things are all over. That old adage comes to mind: “When a door closes, God opens a window.”

We might consider ourselves as followers of Christ “too old” or “too tired” to accomplish the dreams that we have for God. Whether we are talking about recasting a vision for mission, dreaming of an alternate worship service for the non-Sunday crowd…whether we are thinking of how to open our church to serve the hungriest or neediest of our community…I am here to tell you, we are never too old or too tired or too busy. I believe that God is working within each one of us for our salvation AND the world, for we are a part of God’s plan. And I think, just as with Sarah and Abraham, God at times offers us something to laugh about, to tease apart our frustration and guilt, and remind us of the lightness of living by God’s grace. For we do not need to take things more seriously than He.

So, listen to God’s plans for you. And – go ahead and laugh. God is laughing along with you. We live our lives on the edge, sometimes our future is very unclear. But if we knew what good things God is planning, right now I’m sure it would just tickle you. Amen.

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**Social Distancing and Personal Protection.** Please respect one another’s space, observing the 6-foot distancing between one another. Please remember to wash your hands on the way out today.

**Session Meeting Today.**  The Session will have a regularly-scheduled meeting today after worship.

**2020 Cookbook.** Kenna is nearly ready to print the cookbook. If you have a recipe for it, please get it to her asap, so that we can distribute it. Thanks!

**No Rummage Donations Yet.** The Session also requests that we hold off on donations to the Rummage Sale for the time being.