**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, May 10, 2020 5th Sunday of Easter**

**Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor**

**“Will You Come and Follow Me – The Summons” First-Plymouth Church, Lincoln, Nebraska**



**Call to Worship**

God invites us to come in and go out and find pasture:

**to come into the kingdom, into abundant life, into the light;**

**to go out to serve, out to live our faith, out to be the Body of Christ.**

Christ calls us to hear his voice

**and so we come to listen and seek and follow.**

We stand at the threshold of God’s future,

**the Spirit stands at the door and knocks.**

Come, let us worship.

**Prayer of Confession (prayer by Rev. Nathan Williams, Covenant Presbyterian, Des Moines, IA; based on** *based on 2 Samuel 5)*

**God of justice,
in baptism you anointed us
to live boldly in the reality of your coming kingdom.
We confess that we have not fulfilled our calling.
We have not used your power to serve our neighbors.
We have walked away from oppression and injustice.
We have turned our backs on your beloved children
who hunger and thirst in a world of plenty.
Forgive us, Lord.
Make us courageous servants
of your justice, peace, and wholeness,
in Jesus’ name. (silence) Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

The Lord’s abundant mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

Believe and live the good news:

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

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Welcome to the Video Portion of our worship for this 5th Sunday in Easter.**

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**Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16**

In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
**do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.**Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
**Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.**

You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
**for your name’s sake lead me and guide me,**take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.
**Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God**

My times are in your hand;
**deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.**Let your face shine upon your servant;
**save me in your steadfast love.**

**Prayers of the People *(by Katherine Kussmaul,***[***Saint Giles Presbyterian Church, Raleigh, North Carolina***](http://www.saintgiles.org/)***)***

Word of God, come to us as you came to Lazarus.

Come to the caves of our lives –
caves we have created,
and caves we have sought;
Caves to which we have been sent,
caves in which we now reside.

Come to the caves of our world –
caves of containment,
and caves of protection;
Caves of solace and anxiety,
caves that quickly become tombs.

Word of God, come to us as you came to Lazarus.

Call us back to life –
life created by you,
and life sustained by you;
Life in relationship with you,
life in service to others.

Call us back to life –
life that is hope in despair,
and peace in unsettled times.
Life that is joy in sorrow,
love beyond understanding.

Word of God, come to us as you came to Lazarus.

Unbind us and set us free –
liberate shackles of sadness,
and burdens too heavy to bear.
Release us from fear that inhibits
deliver us in your grace.

Unbind us and set us free –
call us to community,
and fuel us for connection.
Show us your way,
inspire us to walk with you.

Through the renewing power of your Spirit,
and grounded in the words you teach us to pray….(The Lord’s Prayer)

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**(Offerings may be submitted to PO Box 367, Tucumcari, NM 88401. If you need to make a special arrangement, please call me at 708-0860. You can also visit our Facebook page for more information at** [**First Presbyterian Church Tucumcari, NM**](https://www.facebook.com/1stPresbyterianTucumcari/)**.)**

**\*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.**

**\*Let us pray with gratitude:**

Lord, we thank you for all that we have. We thank you for your sustenance and for the power you have given to your church. Strengthen our walks of faith and help us see where we can generously give God’s gift of the Gospel to others in these times. Amen.

**\*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**

**Prayer for Illumination**

Risen Christ,
you opened the scriptures to your disciples
and made their hearts burn within them.
Open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts,
so we might recognize you once again
in these words of scripture,
by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Acts 7:55-60**

55But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56“Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” 57But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. 58Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.

**1 Peter 2:2-10**

2Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation — 3if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and 5like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6For it stands in scripture:
     “See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
          a cornerstone chosen and precious;
          and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”
7To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,
     “The stone that the builders rejected
          has become the very head of the corner,”
8and
     “A stone that makes them stumble,
          and a rock that makes them fall.”
They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
10  Once you were not a people,
          but now you are God’s people;
     once you had not received mercy,
          but now you have received mercy.

**Sermon: “New Beginnings” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

We have seen the endings of many things lately. We hear declarations that we have hit a “new normal,” because of this pandemic. Some believe we will never be the same again. This is partly because we will always remember the season of face masks, isolation and having to change the way we live our every day lives. I also believe that in this information age, where so many people think they’re experts in epidemiology or infectious diseases just because they have access to the internet, misinformation can do more damage to us than the truth.

The more the world around us changes, the more we try to adapt to the change. Adaptation is scary. It means we might have to let go of something and welcome something else that is new or different. We face having to decide what’s most important to us and base our decisions on the most essential things of life. Hopefully, even if we feel frustrated or scared about the state of the world, we can put those feelings to good use, motivated to sharpen our minds with a greater wisdom to decided between right and wrong.

I am reminded these days of the ever-popular “Serenity Prayer.” People in AA often say it and that’s because it is really good. It’s a pocket-sized prayer good to pull out in the middle of any crisis: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.”

First of all, prayer is a probably one of the best things we can do, we don’t know what TO do. Second, this prayer says it all, for when we’re stuck between a rock and a hard place, we know we are going to have to grow some direction or another.

You might say that Stephen was stuck between a rock and a hard place. Stephen had just told the entire story of God’s salvation, from the dawn of creation up to the present time, preaching this powerful message to the Temple High Priest and the Council. He has just given one of the longest speeches you have seen in the New Testament. It goes from verse 1 through verse 54. He quotes the prophets and the Law. He then says to them: “’You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do …’” This really made them mad. Stephen’s back was already up against the wall. For he was there before the council in order to be questioned on charges of blasphemy, based on false witnesses who wanted to do him in.

The Law called for stoning of those found guilty of blasphemy.

What is ironic here is that Stephen is calling their bluff, accusing them of killing prophets of the Lord, including Jesus. And that’s what they do to Stephen too. The historic site of this famous martyrdom is just outside the Lion’s Gate of Jerusalem. Stephen died there because he was doing what he was supposed to do. He was one of 7 disciples who were especially called to the purpose of proclaiming the gospel. He was doing what he was supposed to do, in the footsteps of Jesus. Not to die, necessarily, but to live a life dedicated to the work of God. Acts chapter 6 tells that this is what Stephen was supposed to do. He was handpicked along with 6 other apostles for the express purpose of proclaiming the Word of God. They received a laying on of hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit to seal this ministry.

Stephen took his calling so seriously, that it put an end to his earthly life. But another interesting part of this story is the presence of another, a man who stood by during Stephen’s death, holding the cloaks of those who cast stones. His name was Saul. As Stephen died, Saul didn’t know it yet, but he was about to begin a new life.

Saul was sure of himself. He knew what he believed and he was well trained to talk about it. Like Stephen, Saul had a calling to talk about God. However, at the time, Saul did not know just to what extent God would use him, his gift for communication, his zeal and even his past history of being complicit with murder. I am talking about the Apostle Paul. Complicit with the murder of many Christians, Saul’s life was saved for something far greater.

Even though Saul was complicit in the murder of Christians – Christians who he would eventually consider his sisters and brothers – God took all of who he was and turned him into someone who worked with and for Jesus, not against Jesus. Saul gave up more than his name in order to become Paul. He had to let go of his hatred, of his preconceived notions about Jesus and, his pride.

Interesting how God does this sort of stuff. We may ask how or why God chooses to give new life to those who had been sinning against Him. We will never fully understand God’s ways, try as we might. Isaiah once said, “My thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways.” But God will gladly take all of our mistakes, transform our disasters, if we are also willing to part with the things that keep us from saying Yes to God. By releasing whatever is keeping us from saying Yes, in order to let God begin the healing.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. Courage to change the things I can. And the wisdom to know the difference. What is most important to you right now, to change or let go if you can? Something must end in order for new life to begin. Don’t worry about how God does it. Amen.

**Before we close with a little music, prepare to receive the benediction:**

Beloved, we have heard and trusted in
the good news of Jesus Christ.
Go now into the world to do and see still greater things,
to open heaven upon earth
and bear witness to eternal life today;
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**“There is a Fountain (Cleansing Fountain)” Performed by Timothy Seaman, Hammered Dulcimer**

**THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

**Potluck Hosts needed:** June 21st is Potluck Sunday at our church. However, we do not have a host/s for that day. Please consider being host, or sharing that responsibility with another person. It makes all the difference in the world!

**During the Pandemic, Face Masks:** Several people in our church are making protective face masks for us to wear in public from fabric. If you need one, please let me know. I have 3 new ones available and more are being made!

**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**

Betty (Glenda’s sister) – awaiting a diagnosis

Family and friends of Becky Bryant in their grief

Cheryl Brewer – cancer hospice

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

Davis (Russell’s son) – Air Force boot camp in San Antonio

Glenda Coles – broken foot and injured knee

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

Gracie Whitson – still recovering

Ida Macias – broken femur

Jenna Morris, knee problems

Jim Enriquez & family - medical problems

Julie Sursa – difficulty walking

Karen Foster – chemo for cancer

Kaylie McKnight and her family

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

Kurt Goldston - chemotherapy

Levi Mericle – thyroid cancer

Misty Tompkins – stiff person syndrome

Nancy Sallee – two health problems

Family and friends grieving for Paul Quintana

Roseann Mendez battling liver cancer

Ruth Johnson – physical problems

Sharon Huffman – continued health problems

Sharon McCauley – awaiting surgery

Shay – requested by Julie Sursa

Sheila Martinez – Heart Trouble, diabetes, vision problems

Sondra Moore Carlson – chemotherapy

Sonia (Betty Faye’s daughter) recovering from stroke

Stacie (Glenda’s friend) – medical problems

Tom Anderson – chemotherapy and side effects