**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**Sunday, October 25, 2020 Reformation Sunday**

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

**Hymns:**

**RH 131 Come, Christians, Join to Sing**

**RH 236 Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart**

**RH 437 The Church’s One Foundation**

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

**Prayer of the Day**

Eternal God, infinite in power, wisdom and goodness: Let the desire of our souls be to you; let us draw near you with our hearts, and not only with our lips; and worship you in spirit and truth. Let your word be spoken and heard by us as the word of God. Give us attentive, hearing ears, and opened, believing, understanding hearts, that we may no more refuse your calls, or disregard your merciful, outstretched hand, or slight your counsels, but be more ready to hear. Put your laws into our hearts, and write them in our minds, and let us all be taught by you. Let us magnify you with thanksgiving, and triumph in your praise. Let us rejoice in your salvation, and glory in your holy name. Open our lips, O Lord, and let our mouths show forth your praise. And let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord and only Saviour. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

Seeking to follow Jesus, we often wander down the wrong roads. Impatient  
with God’s schedule, we rush off to do things our way. Let us confess our  
foolishness, that we might receive God’s hope for our lives.

**Confession (please see bulletin)**

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Jesus reminds us that we are to be resolute in our lives of faithfulness  
and service.  The good news is that God is steadfast in filling us with love  
and grace.  
**We are forgiven people. May we live as sisters and brothers in Christ,  
God’s children in word and deed, in hope and joy. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**Alleluia! Amen.**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17 (please see bulletin)**

**Prayers of the People**

Holy One,  
Bridger of Distance,  
hear our prayer….

In the midst  
of non-stop news stories  
about illness and scarcity,  
press conferences and cancellations…  
grant us quiet in our minds.

In the midst  
of heightened anxiety  
about caregivers and caregiving,  
about health and hygiene,  
grant us calm in our hearts.

In the midst  
of opposing views:  
close doors or stay open,  
reach out or hunker down…  
grant us peace in our spirits.

In the midst  
of distance  
in our families, our faith communities,  
in all our relationships with others…  
grant us connection in our separation.

In the midst  
of our lives:  
our gratitude and concerns,  
our hopes and longings…  
grant us an abiding sense of Your Comfort.

and be especially gracious to these we name before you…

Tom Anderson and Jean Corey

Glenda Coles

For our church and its leaders

For Teresa Brake’s daughter, Kathy and her family

For Susie Martinez, that she find transportation and help

For Amber

For Derwin Dobbs, radiation therapy for cancer (Ronni Wright’s son-in-law)

For Pat Sieglen, recuperating from surgery

For Jonah after his accident

For those anxious about going out in public

For those living in fear of or with COVID

For students, teachers and families

For our leaders local and distant

For the grandson of Ruby Blea

For our dear church members and friends who are alone or who privately suffer from infirmity

For our nation as we vote for what we believe and think

For local business owners and their clientele as we endure changing restrictions on our movements

In silence, we now lift high our prayers to you…

We cry out “Come Lord Jesus!” knowing of your promise that you will come again, establishing your justice and your peace. These and more we pray in Jesus’ name, who taught his first disciples to pray, saying…

*The Lord’s Prayer*

**Presentation of Offering and Offertory**

**Time out for Teaching: “Unfinished Business”**

This Sunday and next, we will be focusing on the saints of the church, where they have taken us, and where they are helping to send us next.

On this Reformation Sunday, it is appropriate to think about the saints of the Church. Did you know that while we were building the sanctuary, the church met in Fellowship Hall? I hope that it won’t cost us too much to fix the heating units next door, but that shall remain to be seen.

Our buildings are precious to the church, not just because they are expensive to maintain or are expensive to insure or because it costs a lot to heat and cool. They are our home away from home.

While we can meet and greet God wherever we are in life, we can certainly do it here in church. Here we receive comfort, inspiration, encouragement. Here we receive challenges, corrections, redirections. Here we have cried our hearts out. Here we’ve laughed. Here we have questioned. We have mourned. We’ve broken bread together. We have this space, thanks to the saints before us who built it. And thanks to the saints who have also diligently tended to its upkeep.

We are the church reformed and always reforming. God has maintained us as His little group traveling through life and we’ve chosen to do it together. We adjust to adversity as a people and figure out the directions where God is taking us. Just like God’s first people whom God befriended.

**Prayer for Illumination**

Holy and Mysterious God, open our eyes to see you in our midst, open our ears to hear your word afresh, open our hearts to know your grace. Give us understanding minds and willing spirits, that we might be continually made new by your love. In the name of the living Word we pray. Amen.

**Epistle 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8**

1You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. 3For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, 4but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; 6nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, 7though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. 8So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

**Gospel Matthew 22:34-46**

34When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” 37He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38This is the greatest and first commandment. 39and a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

41Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: 42“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” 43He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,  
44  ‘The Lord said to my Lord,  
     “Sit at my right hand,  
          until I put your enemies under your feet”’?  
45If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” 46No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

**Deuteronomy 34:1-12**

1Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, 2all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, 3the Negeb, and the Plain — that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees — as far as Zoar. 4The LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.” 5Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord’s command. 6He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. 7Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. 8The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

9Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the LORD had commanded Moses.

10Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. 11He was unequaled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, 12and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

**Sermon: “Crossing the River” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Every so often, thankfully not too often, I am given a blessed opportunity. That opportunity is not an easy one, but it is a sacred one. I get the opportunity to lead us all worship as we mourn the death of another saint who has crossed over to join the Church Triumphant. It is a special chance to lift up who that person is to us and what a life of faith they lived. We bear witness to their lives and each time is different, for they are all unique children of God. In 2015, we said goodbye to 7 people: Mickey Page (2-8-15), Troy Brake (3-14-15), Eloy Martinez (4-19-15), Tom Carden (5-4-15), Ray McCausland (5-13-15), Mildred Dohrer (7-18-15), Richard Hart (11-7-15). In 2016, in this order, we had services for: Gilbert Martinez (2-20), Thomas Morris (3-10), Barbara Cherry (7-25), Lou Sims (8-1), Rene Bowen (8-13). Those years may have been a couple of the hardest we’ve seen as a congregation. Between the grief, and the service of visitation and meals, it was a bit of a treadmill, but a labor of love. It was a blessed chance to remember and speak good words about them. Some I didn’t know very well. Others I came to know quite well. I pray that I will one day see them again at God’s big banquet in heaven. Of those I know well, I am confident that they served God as best that they could, even though they never got to see what our church looks like now!

Today’s reading from Deuteronomy recounts the time when the Israelites are about to cross over the river into the Land of Promise, flowing with milk and honey. This is a poignant story. Moses sees the Promised Land from the heights of Gilead, in what is now the modern-day-kingdom of Jordan. What a sight it must have been for those tired old eyes of his. I have stood at that place before, looking down and across the beautiful rolling hills and the Jordan River. I can imagine the feeling of both weariness and elation. His calling was fulfilled. His work for God – to be the elder leader of the nation of Israel was finished. Moses had been not only their judge and ruling elder, he was the spiritual counselor who had a “hotline” to God. He was very close to the Lord, and he trusted God more than any of the other Israelites. No wonder with his faith, he was able to accomplish much with God’s help. Moses had been with them, some of them, their entire lives, as we say, from “womb to tomb.” But what is so poignant about it is – something to which we could all relate – Moses could see the Promised Land, but would never get to go over there. He would never get to see it close up, to drink of its waters and eat the fruits of its earth. All of that time and work, 40 years of it, and Moses would never see it for himself.

A cynic might say that God has a sick sense of humor. How could anyone so important as Moses be kept from arriving at his lifelong aim? Maybe God was not being cruel so much as merciful. I am sure that Moses was pretty tired. Deuteronomy says Moses died at the ripe age of 120. The wisdom he gained from this life of leadership and faith must have been enormous. He must have been fearless, after all of this time he spent talking to God and even complaining to God. People who grow old with God tend to find ways to live life without regrets and know when it’s time to move on.

We have a few things in common with him. None of us ever get to see the end of God’s grand plans. At least not in this life. In faith, we try as friends of God, to fulfill our purpose on earth. But like Moses, we have an expiration date and have only this life to live to fullest. But the beautiful thing about being a church is our strivings are not in vain. Our strivings, when we do them together, leave a positive mark on this world, and we are blessed to get glimpses of the Promised Land. You and I are links in a great big chain that connects us to a long history of faithful friends of God. We never do get to see the Church come to her fruition, but in little glimpses and moments of God shining through.

I once read a book called “Friends of God and Prophets” by theologian Elizabeth Johnson. It’s a theology book about the sainthood of ordinary Christians. Saints are friends of God, first. Because we are friends of God, we don’t have to fear a thing. We don’t have to fear talking to God about our problems, as Moses did. Moses really let God have it sometimes. Moses stuck up for himself, was willing to tell God just what he really thought and wanted. And God had meant for Moses to cross that river, he would have. What grew up between Moses and God was not only a demonstration of God’s power and might, and God’s ability to hear the cries of the Israelites enslaved in Egypt. It was also a friendship. A pledge to never leave one another. A demonstration of trust.

Is that also not what we are all to be doing, Saints? In God we have true friendship. So what if we don’t actually see the promised land? Are we leading others to it? We can only do that if we too are friends. I heard a piece of simple advice the other day from an elder who lives down in Corona. We were comparing how our churches have been doing and what a truly difficult year it has been for us all. She said what has helped cut the tension in their meetings and helped them was just this. Remember that we all want the same thing. Things may not be perfect, but we have each other. We want God’s church to reflect in our relationships the friendship God has for us all. We’re all on the same side.

When I call you friends, I mean that. Friends, thank you for being here today on this unusual day. And thank you for being a friend of God and a friend to others. 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. If you need a protective face covering, please notify the pastor and she can help you.

**Daylight Savings Time ends soon!** Mark your calendars on October 31st to “fall back” one hour. Maybe a good nap on Saturday is in order too.

**The Next Session Meeting will be after church on Sunday, November 8th.**

**Operation Christmas Child boxes are due on Sunday, November 8th.** As per the usual, if you get them to church on Sunday, Rev. Amy will get them turned in to Center Street UMC. There are 6 boxes left. One has your name on it!

**Sample Ballots are available.** If you would like to read up on your election options, we also have a couple of booklets left too. Check the Narthex chair for a copy of your own.