

Madison Mennonite Church
Koinonia Worship

May 23, 2021

PRELUDE

At the beginning of your time together, the host may choose to cue the following: [By the waters of Babylon](#)
(Lyrics adapted from Psalms 18 and 137): sung by The Melodians,

GATHERING

Greet one another and add names to the liturgy of those who would like to lead, read, or facilitate. Each blank can be filled by a different person, and all ages are encouraged to participate in leadership! Help non-readers with their lines. Everyone reads the "Many" parts, unmuted for groups reading virtually. Re-mute afterward.

Call to Worship (from Rumi): Reader 1 _____; Reader 2 _____

READER 1: I said: what about my eyes?

READER 2: He said: Keep them on the road.

READER 1: I said: What about my passion?

READER 2: He said: Keep it burning.

READER 1: I said: What about my heart?

READER 2: He said: Tell me what you hold inside it?

READER 1: I said: Pain and sorrow.

READER 2: He said: Stay with it. The wound is the place where the Light enters you.

Lighting our Candles: Leader _____

Leader: Each week, we light a candle to symbolize Christ's presence with us and the unity we have with our beloved siblings at Madison Mennonite.

Light candles

Leader: Christ, our light, bless our fellowship with your Spirit's presence. We remember other MMC Koinonia Groups and pray that we are all united in love and peace. Amen.

HEARING the WORD: Reader _____;

Reader: A reading from Isaiah 43: 16, 18-19 (ESV & NIV)

Thus says the Lord -

"Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.

Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland."

Optional tactile engagement: Invite all ages, but particularly children, to recall things that have been particularly difficult during the last year. Draw a picture of it, or allow yourself to feel the feeling once again. Or, for younger children, invite them to draw a picture of something they want to see or do this year.

Guiding Reflection: Reader: _____

We survived. Most of us survived unscathed. The Great Virus of 2019-21 blew through our lives like a chill winter blizzard and, somehow, we survived it. But as we prepare to return to "normal," many of us may begin to realize that the cuts run deeper than we thought.

Some of us learned that virtual weddings and funerals and graduations, while valiant attempts at offering us what we hope for, leave our hearts emptier than we hoped. Some of us believed that world economies were invulnerable, and we have been shocked to learn that they are balanced on tottering, fragile legs. Some of us who believed that our democracy was impervious to damage have learned that truth can be manipulated more easily than we imagined, and that lies corrode the soul of democracy.

Some of us who believed that racial justice was inevitable have been shocked by watching the murders of black people on our TV screens, and our hope wilted. Some of us who thought we were compassionate have been rattled by our ease at looking the other way. Some of us who believed that it is God's duty to keep us safe have found that our faith has been sorely tested.

Perhaps we have not survived unscathed.

We are tempted to believe that the pandemic is reaching its end. Like so many endings, this one is really a crossroad, with a path to new beginnings. This year has been stressful. We will probably bounce back. It's what resilient people usually do.

Or we could go deeper into our suffering and hardships, facing head-on the experiences that make us question our core beliefs, that cause us to struggle to make sense of who we are. Research suggests that deep growth is possible in this situation, especially if we face our experiences and have a good listener with whom we can talk things through. These challenging experiences may now spur positive change, helping us recognize new strengths, improving our relationships with others, giving us a greater appreciation for life, and helping us grow spiritually.

The end of the pandemic offers something new. We are, as the people of God have been many times before, at a crossroads, a junction at which choices must be made, because they are impossible to avoid. Justice. Service. Community. Racism. Personal growth. God. What lies ahead of us? Our hardships invite us to dare something new, something extraordinary, something that we could not have imagined in 2018. As we ponder who we are, we may find that we have been freed to find new answers to the question of who we will become.

Our suffering, our confusion, and our fear have been real. But if we open ourselves to the presence of God, we will be surprised to discover a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. If we refuse to hide from the truth of what we have been through, perhaps this year will be remembered not as the year from hell, but rather, as the wound that became the place where the Light entered us.



Questions for Group Reflection: **Facilitator** _____

At its best, worship enables us to strengthen the connections we have to our faith community, to Creation, and to the Divine. Use this time to reflect together, using some or all of the questions below, or spend time in silence or draft your own questions if that is best for your group today.

1. Has it been difficult to speak aloud of your loss, suffering, or disorientation during this past year? How has your view of the world been shaken?
2. Do we want to snap back to normalcy as soon as possible, and forget this year? Or do we intend to continue exploring, with even more depth, what we have experienced?
3. We know God is always doing new things. As we emerge from the pandemic, how will we work with God to make new ways in the wilderness, new streams in the wasteland?

At the closing of this time of sharing, pray together:

Facilitator: Loving Spirit, we give you thanks for this time of discovery in scripture and discernment with one another. May we continue to grow in wisdom and understanding as persons and as a church. Amen.

*After this prayer, cue [the following song](#). If you wish to sing along, the hymn is found in **VT 611 Lift Every Voice and Sing** (Sung by Committed.)*

RESPONDING in PRAYER and FELLOWSHIP

Sharing Joys and Concerns: Leader _____

The Leader invites each person (children included!) to share any joys or concerns they bring to the group. Remind your group that if anyone does not wish to share, they may simply say "pass." After all, including the Leader, have been invited to share, and if no one has something to add after a first round, join in a spirit of prayer (below).

Level 1B adaptation: *If the group is 15 people or larger, invite people to type their name in the chat if they would like to share, as we do on All-Church Sundays. Call on people in that order. If the group is smaller than 15 people, follow the instructions above.*

Praying Together

Leader: Holy God, we offer these prayers to you this day, trusting in your faithfulness.
We pray for ourselves, for our loved ones near and far. *(a moment for silent prayer)*
We pray for our community, our nation, and our world. *(a moment for silent prayer)*
Loving God,
Many: _____ hear our prayers. Amen.

Sharing the Peace of Christ: Leader _____

One: As we prepare ourselves for a new beginning, may the peace of Christ be with you.
Many: _____ And also with you.

Continued Fellowship (as time allows)

Invite children to share anything they've created or worked on during this worship time.



Koinonia Worship May 23, 2021, curated by Mark Wagler and Todd Shenk.

Sources used:

Bible reading from the ESV, NIV.

Call to Worship from Rumi

Prelude "By the Waters of Babylon" performed by The Melodians

Hymn 611 performed by Committed

Research and theory on posttraumatic growth by Tedeschi, Rambo, and others (e.g. [Growth After Trauma](#), [How Christian theology and practice are being shaped by trauma studies](#))

Announcements:

*Next Sunday is an MMC² Service. We join Milwaukee Mennonites at **4pm** for worship. Please note the earlier start time! There is no Adult CE.

*Following worship next week, join the Next Phase Working Group to hear a summary of the feedback we've heard from you about the gifts, vulnerabilities, and hopes of being MMC these days. We'll meet at 5:30pm for about a half-hour, using MMC's standard worship meeting link. A reminder will be sent on Saturday and Sunday.

This Week's Calendar:

Tues., May 25 - Adult CE Committee 7pm

Wed., May 26 -

NPWG, 6:30pm

Youth CE, 7pm

Care Team, 7:30pm

Care Call, 8:15pm

Sun., May 30 - All-Church Worship with Milwaukee Mennonite, **4pm**

NPWG Share Back - 5:30pm

For links to these virtual gatherings, please see the weekly e-calendar. To add an event, please email Deni - Deni@Madison-Mennonite.org



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