

Madison Mennonite Church | December 13, 2020

Koinonia Worship

Expecting Weeping, Surprised by Joy

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: Leader _____

Leader: Welcome, friends to this 3rd Sunday in Advent. Join me in the call to worship;

Leader: We come expecting a meager harvest

Many: Only to stagger home with arms full.

Leader: We come expecting the world as we think we know it

Many: Only to find an upside-down kingdom.

Leader: We come expecting weeping

Many: Only to be surprised by joy.

Leader: Come enter the sacred space of worship!

Lighting our Candles: Leader _____

Leader: Today we light the 3rd Advent candle, the candle of Joy. Its color is pink, representing a change from repentance to anticipation of celebration of Christ's birth.

Light the two purple candles from previous weeks, plus the pink candle.

Leader: Christ, our light and our joy, bless our fellowship with your Spirit's presence. Amen.

HEARING the WORD: Reader _____ **Luke 1:46b-55 (Inclusive Bible)**

Reader: Mary said:

"My soul proclaims your greatness, O God, and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.

For you have looked with favor upon your lowly servant,

and from this day forward all generations will call me blessed.

For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and Holy is your Name.

Your mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear you.

You have shown strength with your arm;

you have scattered the proud in their conceit;

you have deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places.

You have filled the hungry with good things, while you have sent the rich away empty.

You have come to the aid of Israel your servant,

Mindful of your mercy--

The promise you made to our ancestors--

To Sarah and Abraham and their descendants forever."

Guiding Reflection: Reader: _____

Today's New Testament scripture is Mary's song "The Magnificat" - it's a song of praise to God, who turns the world upside down. It's a song of solidarity with her people - the poor. It speaks of social upheaval, reversal of privilege, the proud and mighty being toppled. The lowly are exalted and the hungry fed while the rich are sent away empty. It's a revolutionary song. As E. Stanley Jones, a 20th

century missionary once said, the Magnificat is "the most revolutionary document in the world". While powerful rulers were terrified by it, the poor and those oppressed by despotic rule have found strength to persevere by reciting it.

Can we learn to recognize the times when our positions of power may not bring joy? Can we learn to open ourselves to compassion, loving-kindness and the readiness to offer the relief of suffering? By so doing we may find ourselves surprised by joy, which allows us the ability to celebrate Jesus' presence among us. Jesus, by his example, taught us that life can offer a peace and joy which worldly pursuits cannot even begin to provide. In the simplicity of "following in the Jesus way" we are free to find ourselves surprised in ways that can only come from a place of trusting God to provide us with a sense of joy, meaning and purpose for our lives.

Questions for Group Reflection: Facilitator _____

(The facilitator reads the questions aloud and invites response. At 25 minutes into your gathering, or when it conversation has dwindled, the facilitator closes the time with prayer, below.)

We encourage all groups to begin the reflection time with this **"Children's Time"**: Listen to this reading of [My Heart Fills with Happiness](#), by Monique Gray Smith. The host can share their screen and sound to watch together, or each household can mute and watch separately on their device.

1. What fills your heart with happiness? *(Begin with asking the children in your group this before asking it of adults.)*

Choose a couple of the following questions, focusing on whichever ones speak to the group and as time allows.

2. How can we express solidarity with the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed this Christmas season in the midst of a pandemic, in a time when people of color are crying for justice?
3. What would it look like in our world if we were to start singing Mary's song within our churches, our U.S. culture, and the political climate?
4. Have you been surprised by unexpected joy this season? When?
5. Mary claims these radical things as having already happened. She both praises God for these when, clearly, they have not all come to pass. What do you claim and celebrate that hasn't fully happened yet?

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.

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.

Sending: Leader _____

Leader: Every day, God waits to surprise you:
To break into your loneliness with comfort;
To wipe away your fear with peace;
To dance into your life with love.
Expect to be amazed by God's joy!

Continued Fellowship

Please take a few moments to check in with one another on how Koinonia Group worship has been for you and your group. At the outset of the Next Phase Plan, Core CLC and Pastor Valerie noted that we would welcome community input and discernment in January. Today, we are asking you to talk with your Koinonia Groups as we prepare for those congregational conversations. (Your Host will be sharing this informal feedback with Pastor Valerie and Core CLC.)

What have you appreciated about worshipping with a Koinonia Group?

What aspects of worship in Koinonia Groups have been surprising or challenging?

MMC affirmed the Next Phase Plan's overall time frame of lasting through May 2021 (with opportunity for checking in and discernment part-way through the timeframe.) What are your current thoughts about continuing to meet in All-Church Worship 1st/3rd/5th Sundays and in Koinonia Groups 2nd/4th Sundays?

Koinonia Worship 12/13/2020 curated by Annali Smucker-Bryan and Marie Wiebe (guiding reflection).

This Week's Calendar:

Mon., Dec. 14 - Women's Group 7pm
Tues., Dec. 15 - Adult CE Cmte. 7pm
Wed. Dec. 16 - Youth CE 7pm
Care Call 8:15pm
Friday., Dec. 18 - Virtual Boggle 7pm

For links to these virtual gatherings, please see the weekly e-calendar. To add an event, please email Erica Boehr.



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