



Service of Hope and Healing

November 8, 2020

7:00 pm

via zoom

“There is a Balm in Gilead” - Traditional Spiritual, arr. Mark Hayes

solo, Rev. Bodie Gilbert, tenor
Westbury UMC

Opening Prayer

Marcus J Jauregui
Bellaire UMC

PRAYER

Loving God, we are gathered here this afternoon seeking your healing, strength, wisdom, and love for ourselves, others, our denomination, our nation, and the world.

You know us intimately O God.

You understand who we are.

You know what troubles and defeats us.

You know what makes us smile and what makes us sad.

You listen to our questions and our prayers.

You know the people we love

And the people whom we struggle to love.

Sometimes we hurt others.

Sometimes we hurt ourselves.

We bring our own hurts, and the hurts of those we love,

Asking for Your healing

We bring the hurt we have caused others

Asking for Your forgiveness.

SILENCE

Listen to these words of Jesus, words that we can trust:

“Don’t be afraid.”

“I love you.”

“Your sins are forgiven.”

“I am with you always.”

Hear these words of the Prophet Isaiah to God's people in exile, unable to gather freely to worship, living in bondage under an oppressive government, treated as "incompatible" with the citizenry of the nation in which they had been taken captive; longing for a future with hope, for the day when they could all gather a beloved, valued, celebrated children of God around God's family table.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her
that her hard service has been completed,
that her sins are forgiven,
That she has served her sentence,
that her sin is taken care of—forgiven!
She has suffered more than enough
and now it's over and done with."
A voice of one calling:
"In the wilderness prepare
the way for the LORD^[a];
make smooth and direct in the desert
a highway for our God.^[b]
Every valley shall be raised up,
every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level,
the rugged places a plain.
And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
Your God will not grow tired or weary,
and the Holy One's understanding no one can fathom.
God gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young adults stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint."

You are invited to take a moment to silently offer to God the places in your life, family, community, church, the UMC, our nation and the world, that need healing and comfort.

SILENCE

“Be Thou My Vision” – Traditional Hymn, arr. Mark Hayes

solo, Rev. Bodie Gilbert, tenor
Dr. Karina Praxedes Barnett, pianist
Westbury UMC

A Reading from Isaiah 58

Rev. Danny Yang
Westbury UMC

Even amid the suffering of exile, God calls God's people to the work of justice, promising that it will bear fruit in its season if they remain faithful. Hear these words from the prophet Isaiah:

Thus, says the Lord, Your God
“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.
The LORD will guide you always;
The Lord will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
You will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets to Live In!”

“Give Me Jesus”

solo, Pheobie Willis
Bering Memorial

Prayers of the People:

Central UMC, Galveston, a reconciling congregation

Reader 1:

James “Preacher” Campbell

Divine Beloved One, here we are, gathered via zoom, wanting so desperately to be physically present to one another, to embrace each other in our weeping and our rejoicing. Help us be present to one another and to You in Spirit, with an intimacy that seeps into our very bones, knowing that we are not alone. You are with us; we are with each other and with Your world. Let us feel the light of Your glory shining on our faces even in this unusual time of worship when we are gathered and yet not.

We want to be filled, if only for these few passing minutes with the awe that rightfully belongs to this encounter with You our most Holy God.

We come to this holy place, our living rooms, laundry rooms, spare rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens, made holy because we gather in Your name. We come with confidence, knowing that without You, we can do nothing, but with You, all things are possible.

Reader 2:

Rev. Michael Gienger

You alone are Holy and Just and Pure. You alone are loving and merciful and gracious. You alone are worthy of praise and glory and honor and we come to lay before You all our earthly treasures – our homes and families that give us comfort and a sense of security especially in these times. We lay before You our money to be used for the poor and for those sliding into poverty. We bring to You our beloved United Methodist Church and nation, torn asunder by hate and violence. We bring to You our words that You might use them to encourage the faint, to bring good news to the imprisoned, to instruct those who hunger and thirst for right relationship with You, themselves and with others.

All that we have, all that we are, all that we hope to be, all that gives us comfort we give to You in spite of our yearning for greater security in the midst of uncertainty.

Forgive us that we hug these things tightly to ourselves, seeking to find in them what can only be found in You.

Divine Beloved One, we confess that we do not understand precisely what You have in mind for us as we stand in this liminal space, this threshold between the now and the next – nor do we understand what you have in mind for our city, our nation, our church, and our world, but we love You and trust You.

Do not let us let you down in this. Help us to be who You want us to be – to learn what you want us to learn – help us not to waste this experience, but to show to our neighbors, our friends, our families, our children, our grandchildren, and even our enemies, the reality of knowing You.

Reader 3:

Chad Smoth

Paul urged Timothy to offer supplications and prayers for those who are in high positions. But how can we pray, we wonder, or should we pray, we wonder, for leadership that does not want to lead?

How should we pray for those who abdicate their responsibilities? How should we pray for those who by their inactivity or refusal to act create stress, chaos, division, and harm? How should we pray for those who have denied their calling to ensure the health, safety, full welcome and prosperity of those in their care?

We will pray that you preserve us from harm; that you surround them with wise counselors and clear-headed prophets – even if they will not heed their advice nor admonitions. We pray that even if they will not listen to your voice, if they harden their hearts and are willfully deaf, that nevertheless, you will not withdraw from them for the sake of your people and for the sake of all those who have yet to hear of your Son their savior.

Reader 4:

Ezra Bordelon

We pray with all of our hearts for your Holy Spirit to descend on our leaders in the United Methodist Church – that their hearts would burn with Your purposes; that they would be driven to lead with radical determination to open wide the doors of Your church to ALL of your children, no exceptions.

We pray with all our hearts that our leaders would become radical prophets of Your grace and inclusion. That the convicting power of your Holy Spirit would rest on them and on us; and as the wind and fire of Pentecost swept over those closeted in the upper room in *their* moment of uncertainty propelling them into the streets, so may we too be driven from our hiding places.

We pray that we, so moved by your Holy Spirit, would become radical believers, proclaiming the resurrection without apology, bringing our goods to be shared by all.

Reader 5:

Rev. Julia Riley

Keep us from false security, pretending that You make no radical demands on our time, on our possessions, on our knowledge, our skills, our experience.

With all that is within us we want to be the Church you have called us to be – a radically inclusive, bodaciously loving, unwaveringly committed to the good of all in thought, word, and deed.

The radical church. From the roots up empowered, motivated, and active because we have spent time with you, and we cannot do otherwise.

Bring us through this time of devastation, grief, loss, and fear with a sense of confidence and power to focus our lives and witness on what is truly important. Sift us and show us our strengths and limitations.

Help us not waste this testing. We know this is not the end nor perhaps even the middle of this global, national, and denominational ordeal. We know our neighbors and the world itself will need a church transformed, and we want to be *that* Church – a church turned outward, a church willing to give all it has, all it hopes to have, and all it will be, in order that we might be Your hands of healing and voice of encouragement and messenger of peace to the world.

We pray we would not quench your Holy Spirit, tame his flame, nor foolishly hide it under a bucket, rather you would blow on our smoldering wick and ignite your fire in us again. This is our prayer in this holy moment as we pray, gathered and yet not, descend on us for it is in Jesus' name that we pray.

— *A Prayer by Richard White edited*

“The Prayer” – Contemporary, arr. Mark Hayes

solo, Rev. Bodie Gilbert, tenor

A Reading from the Book of Revelation, Chapter 21

Rev. Cassandra Nunez
Bering Memorial

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, beautifully prepared. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and God will dwell with them. They will be God’s people, and God will be with them and be their God. God will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

The One seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

Then the Divine One said: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning, and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.”

“Good, Good Father” – Contemporary, Chris Tomlin

Members from Westbury Contemporary Band
Rev. Bodie Gilbert, tenor
Irene Hsu, alto
Weili Hsu, guitar
Dr. Karina Praxedes Barnett, pianist

Words of Witness

Rev. Diane McGehee
Bering Memorial

Communion

Rev. Bodie Gilbert and Rev. Diane McGehee

Prayer of Confession

For our resistance to being all that You created us to be and for our actions and attitudes that have hindered others from being all that You created them to be; for our actions and attitudes that deny life and that more abundantly to others, including the earth and its creatures and all whom we judge unworthy; for the places that we construct rather than tear down walls, bring discord rather than peace, we ask Your forgiveness, O God.

Hear this Good News! In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen!

The Great Thanksgiving

Christ is here.

The Spirit is with us.

Open your hearts.

We offer them to God.

Let us give thanks and praise to the Infinite One.

We rejoice to give our thanks and praise.

It is a right and good and joyful thing in all ways and everywhere to give thanks to You, O God. Therefore, we join in the chorus of praise that rings throughout eternity, with angels and archangels, prophets and martyrs, creatures of earth, sea and sky and all Your rainbow people, made in your image, by your creative imagination and choice, diverse and unique; together with rocks, hills, waters, mountains, suns, moons, and stars, we magnify You as we say:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of love and power,
All Creation speaks of your glory, O God-with-us.
Blessed are we who come in the name of our God!
Hosanna, Hosanna from our hearts!
Thanks be to our Creator!**

We thank You, O God, that You have always made Your home with the poor and the powerless. With Your hand, You led Your people Israel out of bondage in Egypt. Through Your prophets, You taught Your people to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly in Your Spirit. In Jesus of Nazareth, You made your home with us, and taught us that it is the meek who shall inherit the earth; that those who suffer for what is right are blessed in Your eyes. Through Him, You lived and died as one of us, preaching the Good News of liberation to the poor and the oppressed. Even now, You embrace us in love and give us strength to bring this Good News to ALL.

Remembering Christ

At the feast of Passover, Jesus and his friends met to celebrate their ritual meal. According to tradition, Jesus picked up the unleavened bread to bless it, and surprised them instead with new words. Likening the bread to His own body about to be broken, he broke the bread, and passed it around the circle. When the time came for the final cup of wine to be shared, Jesus again spoke new words, and likened the wine to his own blood about to be spilled.

Consecration

In the same way, therefore, we offer to You, O holy God, this simple bread and this fruit of the vine: Bless them now that they may become for us symbols of love and liberation, even Your body and blood, as we praise You saying:

Breaking of Bread and Blessing of the Cup

Blessed are You, Eternal Sustainer of the Universe; for through Your miraculous creation, You bring forth grain from the earth. As these kernels were scattered upon the mountains and were gathered and made one loaf, even so, make us one, for we are ALL Your beloved children and partake of one bread. Therefore, when the bodies, spirits, and homes of others are broken, we are broken.

Today, we break bread and offer this cup for the suffering of the earth and its creatures, for those whose habitats have been destroyed, for those who struggle for justice, who have paid the price for freedom with their own flesh and blood, and for the millions who suffer oppression, sickness, and distress. And we break bread and offer this cup for those we love, especially
(You are invited to name aloud or silently those you wish to lift in prayer.)

The Prayer of Jesus

Present with each other, and all the world in spirit, we share this simple meal together as one family, offering this bread and this cup in solidarity with Christ's offering for us and as signs of struggle and hope for all creatures, praying as Jesus taught us:

**God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
Holy are ALL Your names.
May Your community be realized,
and Your desires manifested
in Earth even as in the heavens.
Grant us this day all that we require,
and as we have been forgiven by You,
help us to forgive others.
Walk with us through the paths of adversity,
stand firm with us in our times of suffering.
For Yours are grace, justice,
and love, now and forever. Amen.**

The Invitation

All are invited to share this family meal; for we are all one people and each of us is needed to fully reflect the rainbow face of God. Come to the feast prepared for you from the foundation of the world and claim your seat at the family table of God.

Post-Communion Covenant

Having found our place at God's table and shared this holy meal, we covenant with one another to work together until bodies are broken no more, to act until blood is spilled no more, to stand for inclusion until all are "othered" no more, to practice peace until all can dance on the land beneath the sun, feasting together in joy. One day there shall be peace! One day all - ALL - will rejoice together as one family around Your table!

Blessing

Friends continue your journey walking in love, care for one another, care for the earth, seek justice and make peace. Christ goes before you: live boldly, celebrate, and sing! Thanks be to God!
Thanks be to God! AMEN!

"Total Praise" – Gospel; Smallwood, arr. Carol Cymbala

solo, Rev. Bodie Gilbert, tenor