

July & August 2018 Worship Brainstorming Summary

Monday, June 4, 2018

Members present: Carole Koch, Dave Booth, Ron Zuker, Jean Kelly, Jill Warren, Larry Jorgenson, Rob Mertz, Kathy Mertz, Pastor Mary, Vicki Zuker, Betty Kinney, and Karen Booth

July 2018 - Hot Topics



Although we don't always want to talk about faith as it relates to social issues, Jesus' life and ministry showed that following him means seeking personal and social holiness. They are intertwined, and our faith in Jesus calls us to examine ourselves and our place in the world while focusing on the directive to love God and love neighbor.

Many times, examining ourselves as it relates to these issues can make us uncomfortable because we have to confront our own sin and the ways that we've strayed from God's intention for us and for all creation. This series will explore four issues that affect us all - climate change (environmental stewardship/justice), healthcare, racism, and human sexuality (specifically pornography and human trafficking).

Ideas for the series

Resources:

- Adam Hamilton books
- Who Lynched Willie Earle?: Preaching to Confront Racism by Will Willimon. Read Will Willimon's blog: <https://willwillimon.wordpress.com/2017/02/08/sin-a-look-at-who-lynched-willie-earle/>
- Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America by Jennifer Harvey (New York Times article by J. Harvey: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/14/opinion/are-we-raising-racists.html>)
- Protect Young Eyes (<https://protectyoungeyes.com/>)
- Fight the New Drug (<https://fightthenewdrug.org/>) - very comprehensive look at the physical, emotional, and social effects of porn
- Social Principles of The United Methodist Church 2013-2016 (UMSP) <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/social-principles-social-creed>
- United Methodist Social Creed - paragraph 166
- Recent Circuit Rider magazine: http://www.ministrymatters.com/circuit_rider/134/grace-chaos-pastoral-care-in-the-storms-of-19682018-mayjunejuly-2018

Handouts: Faith and Facts cards from General Board of Church and Society

Small Groups: Use UMC resources to have an intentional small group study on human sexuality as we look at the upcoming special session on General Conference.

Introductory video: "Hot Topics." Length: 0:40. Cost: Free.

<https://resources.12stone.com/messages/hot-topics> **Comments:** Use it.

Visuals: Large bottle/label for Tabasco sauce.

Hands-on items: Red hot candies. Small packets of hot sauce (180 Tapatio Picante Hot Sauce packets \$23.40 <https://www.minimus.biz/cart.aspx>). Fresh jalapenos or other chili peppers.

Note from Karen: The dates in green indicate when that scripture reading appears in the lectionary, a helpful tool for planning worship.

General discussion points: 1) We did a similar series, “Can We Talk?” in the fall of 2016 using different topics. Pastor Mary is grateful that our congregation is interested in learning how faith should inform our views of current topics. There is a biblical foundation for how we respond. 2) The United Methodist social principles grew out of the labor and temperance movements in the early 1900’s. 3) The larger UMC is in the midst of “tender times” with discussion around human sexuality, specifically the role of the LGBTQ community in the church. For the past three and a half years, Pastor Mary has been on a committee that has been addressing the intentional and unintentional harm done to gays in the church. The church’s public debate, which dates back to 1972, will be addressed at the UM General Conference in 2019.

July 1, 2018 at 10:00 am: “Christianity and Health Care”

Scripture: John 10: 10 (Contemporary English Version) **5/11/14 & the end of the Good Shepherd passage**

¹⁰A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest.

Scripture: Luke 10: 25-37 (New Living Translation) **7/10/16 & 2018 Annual Conference theme**

²⁵One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?”

²⁷The man answered, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸“Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

²⁹The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Parable of the Good Samaritan

³⁰Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

³¹“By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. ³²A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

³³“Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. ³⁴Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’”

³⁶“Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

³⁷The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”
Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

Synopsis: Much of Jesus’ ministry was spent healing those in need, and he gave his disciples the power to participate in his ministry. Quality, affordable, holistic health care is an important issue for the church as we seek abundant life for all.

Felt need: To have an honest discussion of mental illness and some good tools for helping those who suffer.

Visuals: Edvard Munch’s “The Scream” painting. Vacation Bible School wrap up is today.

Media:

- “Erase the Labels on Mental Health.” Length: 1:12. Cost: \$19.99. Explore how the church can be part of the conversation of mental health.

<https://www.sermonspice.com/product/70625/erase-the-labels-on-mental-health>

Comments: Very good. We know we labeled people this way before. Use it.

- “The Good Life – Health.” Length: 2:38. Cost: \$15.00. A simple, entertaining, yet thought provoking perspective on stewarding what God has given us. There is so much out there on how to take care of ourselves, but what does the Bible say about our physical, spiritual, mental and emotional health?

<https://www.sermonspice.com/product/24116/the-good-life-health>

Activity: Holy Communion

Handouts: “Faith and Facts” cards and **labels** (see media, above)

- “Health Care” <https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/19>
- “Mental Health” <https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/26>
- “Mental Health” bulletin insert <https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/50>

Resources:

- UMSP - Political Community - paragraph 164
- UMSP - Social Community - paragraph 162.V
- <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-social-community#health-care>
- <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-social-community#mental-health>

Music: #2167 “More Like You”; Zach William’s “Fear Is a Liar”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1srs1YoTVzs>

Discussion points: 1) Pastor Mary: There is a need for honest discussion about mental health. It is part of who we are and a large pastoral care issue. 2) Depression and anxiety aren’t the only issues. Aging and dementia need to be included in the discussion. 3) Larry: There are enough health care providers or resources. Prospective memory clinic patients who come from all over west Michigan have to wait three to four months for help. 4) About 20% of Dave’s patients have mental health issues. For Vicki it is 100%. 5) Other problems, like urinary tract infections can cause mental health problems, especially in older patients. 6) Betty: Decreased funding and increased restrictions on how teachers can handle students with problems have put schools in a bind. Related article:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/a3ve66u1y34cavs/A%20Cry%20for%20Help%20%28May%2013%2C%202018%20Muskegon%20Chronicle%29.pdf?dl=0>

7) Jill: School problems are compounded when it is hard to get all the needed parties, i.e. parents, teacher,

principal, counselors, etc., around the table at the same time. 8) Karen: Closing large mental asylums in the last century has left many people homeless, without mental health care. Emergency rooms and prisons have borne the burden of taking care of these patients.

(<https://www.dropbox.com/s/a3ve66u1y34cavs/A%20Cry%20for%20Help%20%28May%2013%2C%202018%20Muskegon%20Chronicle%29.pdf?dl=0>) Vicki: Oregon is trying to house people so the police and community mental health workers can work together. 9) Pastor Mary: The church has not been helpful in advising people to prayer harder or have more faith instead of making a mental health referral. Some have taken their own lives. 10) Ron: A person's disease is not his/her whole identity. 11) Carole: Talking about demons or generational curses isn't helpful either. 12) Betty: We can have empathy, but as a lay person, how do we know what to do? 13) Kathy: Some people are so good at hiding their problems or coping that it is very hard to tell they are having problems. 14) Jill was told not to reach out to the family of a student who committed suicide since she had read the girl's poetry. 15) A stranger came in Pastor Mary's office one then shot himself in front of his family the next. 16) One of Larry's fellow trap shooters, who was the life of the party, burned down his house and shot himself. The day before that he shook hands with all of his friends at the gun club. No one suspected a thing. 17) Will this message be about just mental health? 18) Poor choice of words – crazy, nuts. 19) Jean: How do we react with someone when we know they are hurting? It is sad to see dementia patients alone. They need company. 20) Community of care.

July 8, 2018: "Our Original Sin"

Scripture: Mark 7: 24-37 (see Sojourners article; New Living Translation)

²⁴Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre. He didn't want anyone to know which house he was staying in, but he couldn't keep it a secret.

²⁵Right away a woman who had heard about him came and fell at his feet. Her little girl was possessed by an evil spirit, ²⁶and she begged him to cast out the demon from her daughter.

Since she was a Gentile, born in Syrian Phoenicia, ²⁷Jesus told her, "First I should feed the children—my own family, the Jews. It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

²⁸She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are allowed to eat the scraps from the children's plates."

²⁹"Good answer!" he said. "Now go home, for the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰And when she arrived home, she found her little girl lying quietly in bed, and the demon was gone.

Jesus Heals a Deaf Man

³¹Jesus left Tyre and went up to Sidon before going back to the Sea of Galilee and the region of the Ten Towns. ³²A deaf man with a speech impediment was brought to him, and the people begged Jesus to lay his hands on the man to heal him.

Jesus' words to this woman seem very harsh. **Pastor Mary chose this reading to illustrate that** social classes were as much a reality in Jesus' time as today. She was from a lower class, i.e. she was female, a Gentile, and born in Syrian Phoenicia.

³³Jesus led him away from the crowd so they could be alone. He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then, spitting on his own fingers, he touched the man's tongue. ³⁴Looking up to heaven, he sighed and said, "Ephphatha," which means, "Be opened!" ³⁵Instantly the man could hear perfectly, and his tongue was freed so he could speak plainly!

³⁶Jesus told the crowd not to tell anyone, but the more he told them not to, the more they spread the news. ³⁷They were completely amazed and said again and again, "Everything he does is wonderful. He even makes the deaf to hear and gives speech to those who cannot speak."

Synopsis: Racism is sin because it separates us from God and each other. It infects our lives and our world – sometimes in ways we don't even realize or want to admit. Racism is personal, but it's also structural and systemic. **How do we hear God's call to confess and repent?**

Felt need: Highlighted in yellow.

Visuals:

Media: We did not watch either video as a group.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awGctTODPBk> - shows privilege **Comments:** We didn't get to see this as a group, but it is worth watching. It shows how we have benefitted from our social system. We will use it in worship.
- "What Do You See?" Length: 1:26. Cost \$19.99. Each one of us, no matter our history or heritage has been created in His image. This is what God sees...the question is; what do you see? <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/73645/what-do-you-see>

Activity:

Music: Change My Heart, O God (FWS 2152), God of Grace and God of Glory (UMH 577), God of Love and God of Power (UMH 578), Help Us Accept Each Other (UMH 560); #2171 "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace"; #2181 "We Need a Faith" (could be sung to the tune of *Amazing Grace*)

Resources:

- United Methodist Social Principles <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-social-community#racial-and-ethnic>
- <https://sojo.net/articles/what-jesus-can-teach-us-about-confronting-racism-ourselves>

Discussion points: 1) It is frustrating to see how Ana's friend struggles because she is a young woman of color. At one point Pastor Mary wondered if immigrants face the same problems, but realized skin color trumps other challenges. 2) Larry: Most of us live outside of the inner city and don't know many people of color. It is only through interactions with other community groups, like the Saturday men's breakfast, that we meet guys who look different, but are great (Philips Chapel AME). 3) Muskegon is very segregated. It is only very recently that Mona Shores Schools have become more diverse. 4) Carole was buying a Christmas gift for the daughter of a prisoner, that she realized how hard it was to find a gift (doll?) that looked like it was meant for her. 5) Betty and Jean enjoyed worshipping with others from all over Muskegon. They noticed that friends gravitated towards the same tables for lunch. 6) Racism is learned. 7) Tuesday morning Bible study question: Would an African American family feel comfortable worshipping at Lake Harbor? 8) Ron & Larry: Simple friendly hellos at the grocery store are a good place to start. We have to be intentional to overcome racism.

9) Seeing outright blatant examples of hatred it sickening. So much of it is based on fear.

July 15, 2018: “Let’s Talk about Sex[uality]”

Scripture: Song of Songs – Note from Karen: There isn’t space to include the whole book. The following is an introduction to the Song of Songs from *The Message* paraphrase.

We don’t read very far in the Song of Songs before we realize two things: one, it contains exquisite love lyrics, and two, it is very explicit sexually. The Song, in other words, makes a connection between conjugal love and sex – a very important and very biblical connection to make. There are some who would eliminate sex when they think of love, supposing that they are making it more holy. Others, when they think of sex, never think of love. The Song proclaims an integrated wholeness that is at the center of Christian teaching on committed, wedded love for a world that seems to specialize in loveless sex.

Synopsis: Sexuality is a good gift of God, and we should claim it as a part of who we are as God’s good creation. Like any other gift of God, we’re called to be faithful stewards of sexuality – honoring God and each other. **How do we stand against abuse, exploitation, and commercialization of sexuality in a world where “sex sells”?**

Felt need: Highlighted in yellow.

Visuals:

Media: We did not watch any of these as a group. Only the second video talks about porn.

- “Child Sex Trafficking in America – Jen Spry.” Length: 6:45. Cost: Free. I was 8 years old when I met a man who changed my life forever. A stranger moved in next door and trafficked me for 2 years. My life was never the same. This terror controlled every aspect of my childhood and entire life. No one knew, because I never told. I was too afraid to tell... I believed him, because he made me.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fY7AO6d6HFE>
- “Covenant Eyes.” Length: 1:06. Cost: Free. Porn thrives on shame and secrets. Our [Internet Accountability service](#) is designed to help you overcome porn by monitoring your Internet activity and sending a report to a trusted friend who holds you accountable for your online choices. <http://www.covenanteyes.com/>
- “Sold: Film Trailer.” Length 2:11. Cost: Free. Movie about human trafficking.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UruazVETPOw>
- “Human Trafficking Slam Poem.” Length: 3:51. Cost: Free.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDHzeH-N1S4>
- “She Surrendered – Spoken Word – Sex trafficking & Foster Care.” Length: 3:47. Cost: Free. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIHIsB8j9uk>

Activity: Commissioning of High School Youth Mission Team

Handout: “Human Trafficking” <https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/21>

Resources:

- United Methodist Social Principles
 - <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-nurturing-community#Pornography>
 - <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-nurturing-community#sexual-abuse>
- WAR International – human trafficking <https://warinternational.org/>
- Hope Project <http://www.hopeprojectusa.org/>

Music: #2218 “Sacred the Body” (new to us); #2048 “God Weeps”

Discussion points: 1) Note: We'll use a small group resource to discuss our UMC stance around human sexuality and related issues. 2) The Ivanov's 18th wedding anniversary is on the 16th. 3) The effects of porn and the porn industry are spelled out in detail at <https://fightthenewdrug.org/>. It affects Christian communities. Lust is about what we get; love about what we give. 4) By reading from the "Song of Songs" aka the "Songs of Solomon" we hope to reclaim and celebrate God's good gift of sex. 5) The human trafficking industry is enormous. See Hope Project, WAR International, and the media above for more insight. 6) The Catholic Church has had more than its share of sexual misconduct, but they are not alone. Pastor Mary has seen its effects in two of her churches. 5) While at Annual Conference several years ago, Larry was surprised to hear pastor speak against the need for rules about sexual misconduct. 6) It has only been since the early 1980's that the UMC has pushed for "boundaries" training. It is now mandatory for pastors. 7) Question from Pastor Mary - How did we learn about sex?

Video(s)	No direct teaching	Teacher/nun/priest
Books	Friends	Parents

8) Betty: A dialogue needs to be initiated by parents. 9) Consent can't really be granted if there is a power difference between the "consenting" parties.

July 22, 2018: "Creation Care"

Scripture: Genesis 1-2 (NIV. Pay special attention to Gen. 1:1, 31 & Gen. 2: 15, shown here)

^{1:1}In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

^{2:15}The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Scripture: Psalm 24: 1-2 (Today's English Version. Also see list of Scriptures on

<http://www.earthcareonline.org/pages/bibleverses.html>) **7/12/15**

¹ The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord; the earth and all who live on it are his. ²He built it on the deep waters beneath the earth and laid its foundations in the ocean depths.

Synopsis: Climate change has become a hot-button issue in recent years, but the call to care about God' good creation has always been a part of seeking God's will and way in the world. How do we view ourselves as a part of God's creation and as caretakers of it?

Felt need: Find our place in caring for God's creation.

Visuals:

Media: We only watched the first video as a group.

- "Stewarding Creation." Length: 3:12. Cost: \$19.99. What does it mean to be steward's of creation? This thought-provoking 3-minute video discusses the responsibility we have to care for all of God's creation, including our bodies.

<https://www.sermonspice.com/product/67890/stewarding-creation> **Comments:** A little long. Seems a bit like a commercial. It is holistic in its approach. Thought after the

meeting: If we were to use it, it would be helpful know for sure when it was made to see if the statistics are still accurate. Karen's best guess: 2012.

- "Environment." Length: 4:27. Cost: \$20.00. This is a man-on-the-street documentary which asks passersby, "What is mankind's responsibility to care for the Earth?" showing actual nature footage. <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/43364/environment>

Activity/handout: Print out a list of things people can do to take care of God's creation.

Handout: "Faith and Facts" <https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/9>

Music: All Things Bright and Beautiful (UMH 147); #2272 "Holy Ground"

Resource: United Methodist Social Principles

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-natural-world#global-climate>

Discussion points: 1) We are called to take care of God's creation. Dominion includes responsibility. 2) Is a business' bottom line and need to make a profit inherently at odds with creation care? What about our consumption patterns? 3) Julie Brott: Face Book post of Grand Haven's beach after Memorial weekend – loads of trash left behind. The same thing happens on airplanes, especially in first class (possible rationalization – leaving it behind gives people jobs). 4) Dave: In Iceland, young high school kids must spend the summer picking up trash. It trains them to be very responsible. The country is extraordinarily clean. Betty's related photo: Trash from one person/space junk. 5) Bottle laws and adopt-a-highway programs have helped. 6) Ron: A woman dumped her car's ashtray out in his work parking lot. He brought out a broom and dustpan and had her clean it up. 7) Karen: Neighbor kids were breaking bottles on the fence of their yard in the Detroit area. Karen had them clean it up too. 8) Carole: A FB post about a whale in Japan that had died from swallowing plastic bags was upsetting. A visit to Cumberland Falls in Kentucky to see a moon bow at winter's end instead revealed a river of trash. 9) Sometimes people choose to do nothing because they are overwhelmed. 10) Larry: There is a difference between being a Christian conservative and a political conservative in terms (creation care, global warming, and expense vs. expedience – note from Karen: We'll have to check with Larry to better understand what he means). 11) Karen on climate change: Climate changes. The cycles are very long in human terms. As recently as the 1970's, scientists were predicting a mini ice age. We need to care for the creation even though we don't with 100% certainty the magnitude of our impact helping or hurting our environment. 12) Jean: Convenience consumption adds to the amount of waste we produce, e.g. plastic bottles and straw, disposable diapers. 13) Burning barrels are thankfully a relic of the past around here.

July 29, 2018: Mission Trip Reflections - tentative

Pastor Mary is on vacation

August 2018 - Psalms for the Soul

The psalms have inspired prayer and reflection for centuries and are deeply personal and poetic. Martin Luther called the Psalms "a little Bible." John Wesley said, "this book brings us into the sanctuary, draws us off from converse with men [and women], with the philosophers or disputers of this world, and directs us into communion with God."

When we think of Scripture, Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known passages in the Bible. It brings comfort and peace to people. But there are many types of psalms - not all of them comfortable or peaceful, but still intended for use in worship. We'll explore them and their place in our lives and our worship today.



Ideas for the series:

- write your own psalm; some of Pastor Mary's classes have done this
- invite people to share their favorite psalm (and why)
- read through the psalms in the month of August
- use musical settings for psalms
- have a different person read each week's psalm

August 5, 2018: "Come On, Get Happy"

Scripture: Psalm 1 (Today's English Version. Torah psalm – teaching, instruction) **5/13/18**

¹Happy are those who reject the advice of evil people, who do not follow the example of sinners or join those who have no use for God.

²Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the Lord, and they study it day and night.

³They are like trees that grow beside a stream, that bear fruit at the right time, and whose leaves do not dry up. They succeed in everything they do.

⁴But evil people are not like this at all; they are like straw that the wind blows away.

⁵Sinners will be condemned by God and kept apart from God's own people.

⁶The righteous are guided and protected by the Lord, but the evil are on the way to their doom.

Synopsis: "Happy" in the psalms carries a much different meaning than we're used to today.

What does it mean to find true happiness in God?

Felt need: To find true happiness in God.

Visuals: Large tree beside a stream. Tabletop fountain on the altar and/or the sound of water during the reading.

Media:

- "Psalm 1: 3." Length: 1:19. Cost: We own it. Last used on? Visual liturgy. <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/70357/psalm-13-rooted> **Comments:** Has an Andy Griffith/Opie feel about it. Not very thrilling. Betty scale: 2.5/5.
- "Psalm 1 NIV." Length: 1:02. Cost: \$15.00. Animated visual liturgy. <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/41371/psalm-1-niv> **Comments:** This is a downer. Don't use it.

Activity: Holy Communion

Music: Gather Us In (TFWS 2236); #601 "Thy Word Is a Lamp"; #2025 "As the Deer"; "Don't Worry, Be Happy"; Partridge Family's "Come On, Get Happy"; Pharrell Williams' "Happy"

Discussion points: 1) Happy might better be translated as blessed or at peace with the Lord. We are seeking to be like the tree by the water. 2) This psalm makes the delineation

between good and evil very clear. We probably live somewhere in the middle; we seek to move closer to good. 3) Happy also means righteous, i.e. right aim or right relationship. 4) Carole compared this kind of happiness to the satisfaction she gets when the dishes are clean – a job well done.

August 12, 2018: “Ready to Praise”

Scripture: Psalm 34 (Contemporary English Version - psalm of thanksgiving) – this is an acrostic poem. The first word of each line is the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet. **11/1/17**

¹ I will always praise the Lord.

² With all my heart, I will praise the Lord. Let all who are helpless, listen and be glad.

³ Honor the Lord with me! Celebrate his great name.

⁴ I asked the Lord for help, and he saved me from all my fears.

⁵ Keep your eyes on the Lord! You will shine like the sun and never blush with shame.

⁶ I was a nobody, but I prayed, and the Lord saved me from all my troubles.

⁷ If you honor the Lord, his angel will protect you.

⁸ Discover for yourself that the Lord is kind. Come to him for protection, and you will be glad.

⁹ Honor the Lord! You are his special people. No one who honors the Lord will ever be in need.

¹⁰ Young lions may go hungry or even starve, but if you trust the Lord, you will never miss out on anything good.

¹¹ Come, my children, listen as I teach you to respect the Lord.

¹² Do you want to live and enjoy a long life?

¹³ Then don't say cruel things and don't tell lies.

¹⁴ Do good instead of evil and try to live at peace.

¹⁵ If you obey the Lord, he will watch over you and answer your prayers.

¹⁶ But God despises evil people, and he will wipe them all from the earth, till they are forgotten.

¹⁷ When his people pray for help, he listens and rescues them from their troubles.

¹⁸ The Lord is there to rescue all who are discouraged and have given up hope.

¹⁹ The Lord's people may suffer a lot, but he will always bring them safely through.

²⁰ Not one of their bones will ever be broken.

²¹ Wicked people are killed by their own evil deeds, and if you hate God's people you will be punished.

²² The Lord saves the lives of his servants. Run to him for protection, and you won't be punished.

Synopsis: It's easy to focus on bringing God a list of needs and wants rather than beginning with intentional praise for God's faithfulness. How can praise remind of God “from whom all blessings flow” and transform our attitudes and actions?

Felt need: To be transformed through praising God.

Visuals:

Media:

- “Psalm 34.” Length: 2:09. Cost: \$15.00. Visual liturgy from The Work of the People. <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/2166/psalm-34> **Comments:** No.

- “Psalm 34.” Length: 2:33. Cost: \$10.00. Twenty-two verses. Twenty-two people. Enjoy this simple video showing people from various backgrounds, cultures and ages reading this amazing Psalm in their own unique way using The Message paraphrase. <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/33989/psalm-34> **Comments:** We would like to recreate this using our own people. Include people we don’t always see in church, a contemporary translation (like The Message or the Common English Bible), and subtitles. It could be video or audio and a still image of the person speaking. We have directory photos. Potential volunteers: Edna Gilbert, Shirley Ploughman, Max Thompson, the Bosch boys, Ethan Fuller, Polly Cryderman, Ken Luckett, Dave Lorenz. Jean is willing to help record.

Activity: Writing a psalm

Music: Blessed Assurance (UMH 369); “Ten Thousand Reasons”; #3002 “Blessed Be Your Name”; Praise You in This Storm”; #2018 “Honor and Praise”; Tauren Well’s “Hill and Valleys”

Discussion points: 1) Psalm 34 is David’s testimony: I asked and God supplied. 2) How often do we start our prayers with thanksgiving? What would change if we started there?

August 19, 2018: “Laid Bare”

Scripture: Psalm 143 (Contemporary English Version - psalm of lament – penitential psalm)

¹Listen, Lord, as I pray! You are faithful and honest and will answer my prayer.

² I am your servant. Don’t try me in your court, because no one is innocent by your standards.

³My enemies are chasing me, crushing me in the ground. I am in total darkness, like someone long dead.

⁴I have given up all hope, and I feel numb all over.

⁵I remember to think about the many things you did in years gone by.

⁶Then I lift my hands in prayer, because my soul is a desert, thirsty for water from you.

⁷Please hurry, Lord, and answer my prayer. I feel hopeless. Don’t turn away and leave me here to die.

⁸Each morning let me learn more about your love because I trust you. I come to you in prayer, asking for your guidance.

⁹Please rescue me from my enemies, Lord! I come to you for safety.

¹⁰You are my God. Show me what you want me to do, and let your gentle Spirit lead me in the right path.

¹¹Be true to your name, Lord, and keep my life safe. Use your saving power to protect me from trouble.

¹²I am your servant. Show how much you love me by destroying my enemies.

Synopsis: We’ve lost the power of lament in our lives, but the psalms are full of expressions of grief and sorrow – both for individuals and for communities. **How can we open our hearts fully to God and offer the deep pain we feel because of our own sin and broken world?**

Felt need: Highlighted in yellow.

Visuals: Job sculpture by Ivan Meštrović, right



Media:

Activity:

Music: Freely, Freely (UMH 389); Tenth Avenue North's "Worn"

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zulKcYItKIA> – we've used this at our Blue Christmas services); #2200 "O Lord, Hear My Prayer"; #520 "Nobody Know the Trouble I See"

Discussion points: 1) We have forgotten how to freely and publicly lament, as individuals or as a community, as once was common. 2) The Psalms echo the prayers of our own hearts. 3) June 4th was the sixth anniversary of Nic Wypa's death at Churchill's field day. The kindergartener aspirated a small stone. 4) Betty & Jean: As we have experienced city/school shootings, bullying, school threats, many communities have come together to lament and seen its value. 5) When Lakeside UMC closed and merged with LHUMC, we tried very hard to offer opportunities to work through the grief? Did it help? Yes. 6) Carole: Sing old gospel songs. 7) Jean: Elvis's "You Gave Me a Mountain" (Born in the heat of the desert my mother died giving' me life....Oh, but this time, Lord, you gave me a mountain, a mountain you know I may never climb...) 8) Verse 12 shocks us: *Show how much you love us by destroying my enemies*. David wants revenge plus. If we are honest, don't we sometimes want the same thing?

August 26, 2018: "Honest to God"

Scripture: Psalm 137 (The Message - psalm of lament – funeral psalm – expression of grief and anguish)

¹Alongside Babylon's rivers we sat on the banks; we cried and cried, remembering the good old days in Zion.

²Alongside the quaking aspens we stacked our unplayed harps;

³That's where our captors demanded songs, sarcastic and mocking: "Sing us a happy Zion song!"

⁴Oh, how could we ever sing God's song in this wasteland?

⁵If I ever forget you, Jerusalem, let my fingers wither and fall off like leaves.

⁶Let my tongue swell and turn black if I fail to remember you, If I fail, O dear Jerusalem, to honor you as my greatest.

⁷God, remember those Edomites, and remember the ruin of Jerusalem, That day they yelled out, "Wreck it, smash it to bits!"

⁸And you, Babylonians—ravagers! A reward to whoever gets back at you for all you've done to us;

⁹Yes, a reward to the one who grabs your babies and smashes their heads on the rocks!

Synopsis: Sometimes we're surprised by what we read in Scripture, especially when it expresses feelings we'd rather deny like jealousy or revenge. How do we navigate the tension of coming to God in honest prayer and allowing God to judge those we consider enemies?

Felt need: Quit denying our negative feelings and allow God to judge our enemies.

Visuals:

Media: "Cocoon." Length: 2:35. Cost: \$20.00. A modern day psalm of grief and loss – not Psalm 137. <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/72528/cocoon> **Comments:** We did not view this as a group.

Activity:

Music: Don McLean's "Babylon"; What a Friend We Have in Jesus (UMH 526); #2227 "By the Babylonian Rivers" (new to us)

Discussion points: 1) Pastor Mary admits that she doesn't like this psalm. The context is that the Israelites were far from home longing for Jerusalem when the Babylonians asked them to sing. Thoughts jealousy and revenge are real and need to be expressed (v. 9), just not acted on. Judgment is left to God. 2) Pastor Mary's question: When do we want revenge "plus"?

Tweeting wars (or other mean things that aren't voiced face-to-face).

When we see people treat cashier or other workers treated poorly.

Road rage

Billy Joel – "Don't take any s--- from anybody" (shouldn't it be "Don't give any s--- to anybody"?)

Schadenfreude – pleasure derived by someone from another person's misfortune

3) Escalating emotions never lead to a good place. 4) "I'm going to take my ball and go home." 5) When can we learn to turn the other cheek? 6) There is a lack of civility today. When will the pendulum swing back to kindness? 7) "When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace." Jimi Hendrix

September 2, 2018 at 10:00 am: "God the Promise Keeper"

Scripture: Psalm 81 (New Living Translation - covenant psalm) **8/28/16**

¹Sing praises to God, our strength. Sing to the God of Jacob.

²Sing! Beat the tambourine. Play the sweet lyre and the harp.

³Blow the ram's horn at new moon, and again at full moon to call a festival!

⁴For this is required by the decrees of Israel; it is a regulation of the God of Jacob.

⁵He made it a law for Israel when he attacked Egypt to set us free.

I heard an unknown voice say, ⁶"Now I will take the load from your shoulders; I will free your hands from their heavy tasks. ⁷You cried to me in trouble, and I saved you; I answered out of the thundercloud and tested your faith when there was no water at Meribah.

Interlude

⁸"Listen to me, O my people, while I give you stern warnings. O Israel, if you would only listen to me! ⁹You must never have a foreign god; you must not bow down before a false god. ¹⁰For it was I, the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it with good things.

¹¹"But no, my people wouldn't listen. Israel did not want me around. ¹²So I let them follow their own stubborn desires, living according to their own ideas. ¹³Oh, that my people would listen to me! Oh, that Israel would follow me, walking in my paths! ¹⁴How quickly I would then subdue their enemies! How soon my hands would be upon their foes! ¹⁵Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him; they would be doomed forever. ¹⁶But I would feed you with the finest wheat. I would satisfy you with wild honey from the rock."

Synopsis: Covenant is a foundational part of the relationship between God and us. **How do we reflect God's promise-keeping in our relationship with God and others?**

Felt need: Highlighted in yellow

Visuals: Wheat. Honey.

Media: We did not watch these as a group.

- "We Have a Promise." Length: 1:13. Cost: \$14.98. This short video asks where do you run to for help when the storms of life come? There is hope that is found in God and His promises to us. God is with us. There's no reason to fear if we trust in Him. God is for us and He cares for us. <https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/37976/we-have-a-promise>
- "God's Promises." Length: 0:47. Cost: \$6.99. Teaching on how sometimes God's promises take dark days to be realized, just like seeds planted in dark places. <https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/61463/gods-promises>

Activity: Reaffirmation of Holy Baptism. Holy Communion.

Music: Standing on the Promises (UMH 374); #629 "You Satisfy the Hungry Heart"; #2006 "Lord God, Almighty"

Discussion points: 1) The psalm writer recounts the covenant with God. What are the covenants we keep? 2) Note the call to listen to God.