

May 3

Welcome to worship this morning. I am Pastor Carol Rhan. We are thrilled to have Kathleen Linder back live with us for worship music today. We are practicing physical distancing and wearing masks when not speaking or singing.

Today, as a first Sunday, is Communion Sunday. This Thursday, May 7, is our National Day of Prayer. The National Day of Prayer was enacted by congress in 1952 and happily as traditions and experiences change, nowadays, this day of prayer includes all faiths.

I invite you to click on Like or share an emoji or make a comment as you share this time with us.

**Let us pray:** Eternal One, bringing us together today, we are reminded of your power and grace, the movement of the Holy Spirit in our daily living and the sacrifice of your Son. Help us to be all that we can be in your kingdom. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you, my rock and my redeemer. Amen

### **Acts 2:42-47**

That day about three thousand took him at his word, were baptized and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.

Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.

They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

### **Psalm 23**

<sup>1-3</sup> GOD, my shepherd! I don't need a thing.

You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from.

True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction.

<sup>4</sup> Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side.  
Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure.  
<sup>5</sup> You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies.  
You revive my drooping head; my cup brims with blessing.  
<sup>6</sup> Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life.  
I'm back home in the house of GOD For the rest of my life.

## **1 Peter 2:19-25**

### The Kind of Life He Lived

<sup>18-20</sup> You who are servants, be good servants to your masters—not just to good masters, but also to bad ones. What counts is that you put up with it for God's sake when you're treated badly for no good reason. There's no particular virtue in accepting punishment that you well deserve. But if you're treated badly for good behavior and continue in spite of it to be a good servant, that is what counts with God.

<sup>21-25</sup> This is the kind of life you've been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. He suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it, step-by-step.

He never did one thing wrong,  
Not once said anything amiss.

They called him every name in the book, and he said nothing back. He suffered in silence, content to let God set things right. He used his servant body to carry our sins to the Cross so we could be rid of sin, free to live the right way. His wounds became your healing. You were lost sheep with no idea who you were or where you were going. Now you're named and kept for good by the Shepherd of your souls.

### **John 10:1-10** He Calls his sheep by name

<sup>1-5</sup> "Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he's up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him, and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them, and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won't follow a stranger's voice but will scatter because they aren't used to the sound of it."

<sup>6-10</sup> Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So, he tried again. “I’ll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn’t listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

These are the inspired words of God for the people of God. And the people say, thanks be to God.

**Doxology** Praise God from whom all blessings flow .....

### **Message**

Think about what I just read from Acts. “That day about three thousand took him at his word, were baptized and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.

Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person’s need was met.

They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.” (UMC Discipleship Ministries <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/revive-us-again/fourth-sunday-of-easter-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes>, May 1, 2020)

This is early description of young church life and how early Christians went about living a renewed life in Jesus Christ. Did they actually sign something? Probably not. Yet the description makes the case for a beautiful almost communal way to live out our call. Still as I thought about this, many among us would rant and rail against what to them might be blatant and egregious socialism! I mean really! They pooled their resources, and everyone shared equally, and they ate at the same table and rejoiced in it. How far we have come from Acts!

In our Methodist theology, we have a philosophy called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Wesley Four Parts). Now John Wesley didn’t develop this per se, that was done some years later by a Wesleyan theologian and scholar. But the Wesleyan Quadrilateral describes the principal factors that John Wesley believed illuminate the core of the Christian faith for the believer.

I'm going to share the official United Methodist Church website explanation because I hope you will explore this more deeply. "The resulting four components or "sides" of the quadrilateral are (1) Scripture, (2) tradition, (3) reason, and (4) experience. *Sometimes we use the acronym REST.* For United Methodists, Scripture is considered the primary source and standard for Christian doctrine. Tradition is experience and the witness of development and growth of the faith through the past centuries and in many nations and cultures. Experience is the individual's understanding and appropriating of the faith in the light of their own life. Through reason the individual Christian brings to bear on the Christian faith discerning and cogent thought. These four elements taken together bring the individual Christian to a mature and fulfilling understanding of the Christian faith and the required response of worship and service." <https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-wesleyan-quadrilateral-the>

I want to explore this idea of tradition for a minute. We value the traditions of the early church when 3000 were baptized and they lived together in harmony, etc. We know not all the early churches lived in Harmony. Why do you think Paul was such a prolific letter writer? He had to correct and cajole the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, etc. But by and by, studying and reading about other Christian cultures and countries, we have an evolving, continually progressing Christianity with new experiences leading to growth through discipleship and service.

For instance, United Methodists recognize only two Christian sacraments: Communion and Baptism. This is because we read that Jesus only performed or gave these two to his disciples and thus to us. This is our tradition. It certainly is not the tradition of other Christians here and around the world. But it is based on scripture, experience, reason and tradition.

I'm sharing this today because in the coming weeks and months, and perhaps years according to some, the traditions we've established thus far in our churches cannot be sustained. This pandemic has fundamentally changed us and how we live in community and in our congregations. Would it be heavenly to go back to the earliest church as described this morning in Acts? Maybe for a while.

But human nature being what it is, that won't happen. Going backwards, to January 2020, the false bliss of the 1950s, or first century Christianity, is a non-starter. But we can learn from this somewhat shared pandemic and do better for having had this experience.

Earlier this week I was in a large local store hunting for the elusive bleach wipes. My reason told me that I needed to wear a mask when I go out in public. Yet when I went in the store, I didn't see any staff or other patrons wearing a mask. These masks are intended to protect others first, and us. As I was standing at the checkout, with my mask on, the clerk was

complaining about all the mask hysteria, even having masks on our local statutes. Which I actually think is kind of cute.

Folks, the 3000 who were baptized in Acts had a common goal of sharing in common experiences and by pooling their resources understood that the well-being of one is dependent on the well-being of all. We have not learned that lesson here in Glendive, this country or the world. And responses to COVID 19 reflect that.

We will never return to that description I read. But as we go forward, as we discover Christ in new ways with new ways to celebrate, praise and live out His teachings, I pray that we will be a kinder, gentler, less with anger, fewer firearms, and more compassionate people. I pray that rather than risk their congregation's health, clergy will encourage caring for others before themselves. I plea for politicians everywhere not to make decisions for their own power and economic stability, but for the needs of all or at least the common many.

We can't and shouldn't return to the past, keeping all the traditions that are no longer fruitful. But maybe we can learn from it, not repeat it and certainly do better than we have been.

Amen and Selah

**Communion Hymn** Let Us Break Bread Together UMH # 618

### **Prayer of Confession for Communion**

I share this prayer of confession for each of us present here now and who may hear this later. As human beings, we share many of the same sins of omission and commission. Lord in your mercy, hear the silent and loud prayers today. Let us pray.

**Holy God, we open our hearts to you this day, and offer the truth of our lives:**

**The fear that stifles us, The prejudice that blinds us, The ignorance that hobbles us, The doubt that plagues us.**

**Help us, we pray, that we will Find courage in unlikely place, See the world with new and gracious eyes, Move to those places where love is needed, Have faith that you are with us. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

Hear the Good News: we are forgiven! We are set free to go out into the world and be the loving, gracious, hopeful people of God! **Alleluia! Amen.**

### **Communion Liturgy**

**Closing Hymn** Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us UMH # 361

**Sending Forth** I invite you to join me in the Lord's Prayer as we go into the world, even our smallish worlds, this week.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever amen.