

There are moments in our lives when we find ourselves at a crossroads. The choices we make in those moments can define the rest of our days



New Covenant Presbyterian Church
February 12, 2023 10:00am Service



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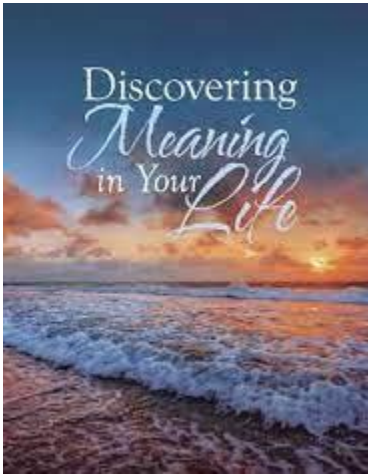
The Worship of God

February 12, 2022 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

Welcome and Announcements

Sharing Our Vision

Preparing Ourselves for Worship During the Musical Prelude ...



I would read books like Frances Mayes' "Under the Tuscan Sun" and Peter Mayle's "A Year in Provence" and then I would imagine myself moving to a place like that, and in my imagination I would meet charming, slightly eccentric people who loved life in tiny villages, and I would renovate an old farmhouse (never mind that I can't change a light bulb without checking a YouTube video first to find out how it's done), and I would master a new language, and I would discover the meaning of life – or at least important truths about life that were somehow inaccessible to me in my humdrum, American suburban life. None of this has happened. I did not move to Tuscany or Provence, it's true, but I did move to Switzerland...

I have met wonderful people here, also true, but they are not always charming, and they are sometimes more than just a little eccentric. A better word might be "irritating." Not all the time, certainly, but often enough. For heaven's sake, they are human beings, and I knew plenty of them where I

came from...

If discovering the meaning of life is what you want to do, I recommend that you stay where you are, even if it's a crummy little town, find a comfortable place, close your eyes, and then wait for the voice that will eventually come to you. It's the voice of God, and don't ask me how I know. Everyone else who has heard it over the centuries has also recognized it immediately...

The voice sounds pretty much the same whether you are in Tuscany or Provence or my little village of Meilen, which is twelve minutes by train from Zurich. I get up early, while it is still dark outside, and I sit in my living room, always the same place, and listen, knowing that I could be anywhere in the world at that particular moment. It doesn't matter. Because the voice I am listening for speaks to me of truths deeper than charming village life or mountain views. The voice I am listening for speaks to me of truths worth knowing, truths that are worthy of me...The voice I am listening for tells me that I am loved with a love that is beyond description. If adventure is what you seek, it's closer than you know.

- Douglas Brouwer, "Under the Meilener Sun" DB blog,

Preparing to Meet God

Call to Worship

L: God calls us to make choices and advises – Choose Life!

P: *This is a serious invitation – an important choice.*

L: It establishes a covenant with God when we choose Life.

P: *It is also a prayer that we stay straight on the Road of Life with God.*

A: *Holy God, may each moment of every day be filled with our commitment to CHOOSE LIFE. Help us choose to be as fully alive as possible, and to encourage the same for others. We pledge to walk to road of life with Christ our Brother, Friend, Teacher, Savior and Lord.*

Hymn

'Tis the Gift to Be Simple

(Repeat twice)

1- 'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where I ought to be;
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

2- When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed;
to turn, turn, will be my delight.
Till by turning, turning we come round right.

Prayer of Confession



L: I invite you into a time of private reflection. It may be helpful for you to close your eyes and ask yourself: How is it with me today? What brings a smile to my face or a lump to my throat? Is this a good day or one that requires kindness and patience as frustrations build? Honor the swings of contentment and concern that are a part of every life, as well as the unique shifts that are new to our time. Tell God silently how you are doing. Invite God to help you remember a decision from the past week when you chose the Way of Life with Blessings, Rather Than Curses. God is always very lovingly toward us even when we can't sense God's presence. Rest in the hope of God's sustaining care.

During this time of silence, sit with God. Let us begin with a prayer from Psalm 46:10: Be still and know that I am God. *(pause)* Be still and know that I am. *(pause)* Be still and know. *(pause)*

Be still. *(pause)* Be. *(pause)*

Try to sit quietly in a state of calm devotion. It can be very hard to still the mind. Our thoughts wander, feelings arise, our bodies wiggle. It can be shocking how quickly our good intentions go astray! Do not fret, dear one. The mind likes to think. With compassion, acknowledge what rises but try not to engage any thought or feeling. Practice choosing to refocus on God. Take a breath and try again. Each time we choose to return to God, gently turning away from our overactive minds, is a gift we give to God.

Let us quiet our minds and prepare to move on.....*pause*.....Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

L: The God of our ancestors is the God of our descendants and the God of this very moment too. The Eternal One forever calls all living beings into existence .

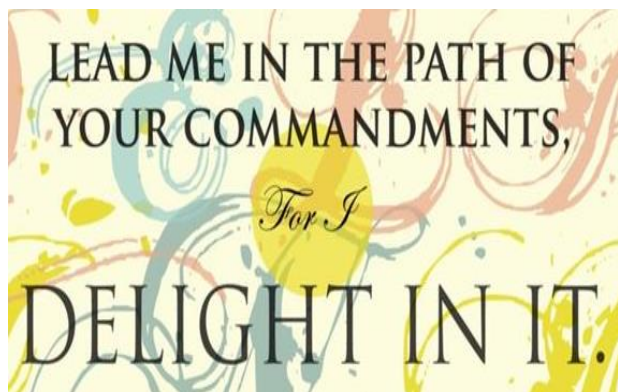
P: We are invited, again and again, to CHOOSE LIFE.

L: God's eternal encouragement is a form of grace. We are always being coaxed by God's goodwill into a better future.

P: ***We are grateful for God's life-giving grace, and we claim the promise and gift of forgiveness, for in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!***

Meeting God in the Word

Children's Message/Prayer for Illumination



Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. Happy are those who keep his decrees, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways.

You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. O that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.

I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous ordinances. I will observe your statutes; do not utterly forsake me.

L: This is the Word of the Lord. **P: Thanks be to God.**

Special Music

Simple Gifts/Pachelbel's Canon

Donald Moore

Second Reading

Deut. 30: 15-20

The Choice of Life or Death, Blessings or Curses

Carol

(The Context: Moses is speaking to the liberated Hebrew people as they draw near to the Jordan River. Their ancestral homeland is very close.)

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.



See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

L: This is the Word of the Lord. **P: Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

At a Fork in the Road

Responding to the Word

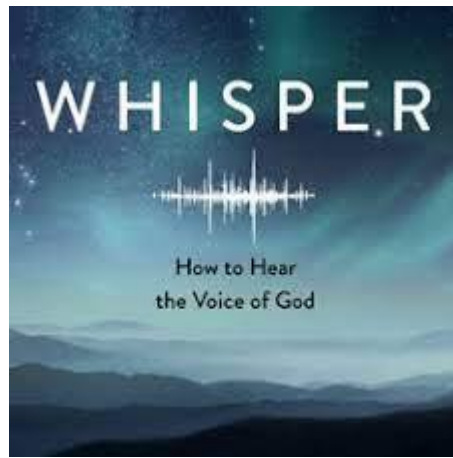
Hymn # 410 G2G

God Is Calling Through the Whisper

*1-God is calling through the whisper of the Spirit's deepest sighs,
Through the thrill of sudden beauties that can catch us by surprise.
Flash of lightning, crash of thunder; hush of stillness, rush of wonder;
God is calling – can you hear? God is calling – can you hear?*

*2-God is calling through the voices of our neighbors' urgent prayers,
Through their longing for redemption and for rescue from despair.
Place of hurt or face of needing; strident cry or silent pleading;
God is calling – can you hear? God is calling – can you hear?*

*3-God is calling through the music of sublime and human arts,
Through the hymns of earth and angels, and the carols of our hearts.
Life of joy and gift of singing; days and nights our praises bringing:
God is calling – and we hear! God is calling – and we hear!*



Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Cares Chorus: I cast all my cares upon you. I lay all of my burdens down at your feet. And anytime, I don't know what to do, I cast all my cares upon you.

The Call to Celebrate Our Gifts

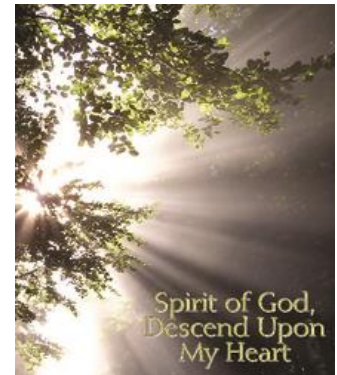
God provided all that we need, and so we are called to return a portion of our blessings to God to be used in God's service. We so appreciate all that each of you shares for our church's ministry. May we all give sacrificially for God's glory.

Prayer of Dedication: Holy and loving God, make us mindful of our blessings, acknowledging you as their true source. Help us to be grateful for the privilege of partnering with you in ministry and mission, and make us faithful to our call, whatever that may be. Amen.

Going Out to Serve

Hymn # 326

Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart

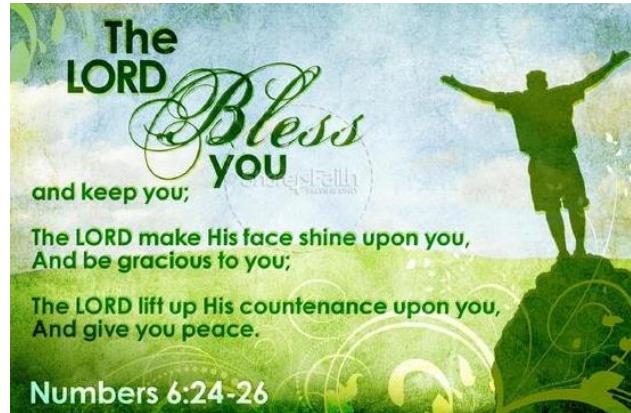


*1-Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art,
And make me love thee as I ought to love.*

*2-I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
No sudden rending of the veil or clay,
No angel visitant, no opening skies;
But take the dimness of my soul away.*

*3-Hast thou not bid us love thee, God and King;
All, all thine own, soul, heart, and strength, and mind?
I see thy cross; there teach my heart to cling.
O let me seek thee, and O let me find!*

*4-Teach me to feel that thou art always nigh.
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh.
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.*



Blessing

L: We are at a crossroads.

P: *Shall we choose life or death?*

L: The way of blessings or curses?

A: *May the Prince of Peace fill us with the courage to always choose LIFE!*

L: And may the blessings.....

Response

*He is Lord – He is Lord,. He has risen from the dead, and he is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord.*