

## Worship October 11, 2020

### Welcome

I welcome you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Friends, Christ is the light of the world. Therefore, as a Christian, we must be glowing and showing the glory of God. Invite God to shine in you this day.

### Opening Prayer

Almighty God who art the Light of the world, grant us your heavenly blessing. May the radiance of Your Light illumine our hearts and brighten our surroundings with the spirit of faith and love. Let the Light of Your Presence guide us, for in Your Light do we see light. Bless us also with Your Spirit, that happiness and peace may ever abide in all people. Amen.

Hymn UMH # 89 Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

### Scripture

Please pray with me, Gracious God, as we turn to your Word for us, may the Spirit of God rest upon us. Help us to be steadfast in our hearing, in our speaking, in our believing, and in our living. Amen.

Isaiah 58:6-10a (NRSV)

<sup>6</sup>Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

<sup>8</sup>Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator<sup>[a]</sup> shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

<sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

<sup>10</sup>if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

Matthew 5:13-16 (CEB)

<sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? It is good for nothing except to be thrown away and trampled under people’s feet. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.

### Presentation of Third Grade Bibles

#### *Congregation to youth:*

We rejoice in this step in your journey with God.

We pray God will guide you, your family, and us

as you use this Holy Bible in your home,

in your church school classes, and in our worship.

We will learn together and grow in our love for God's Word.

The Word of God is a lamp to our feet,

and a light to our path.

Thanks be to God.

Meditation A Light Rising in the Darkness

Bishop Bruce R. Ough

2020 Minnesota Conference Episcopal Address

Abundant grace and peace to you as we gather for this unusual, but necessary, virtual session of the Minnesota Conference.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is my prayer for us this day:

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know him, so that, with the eyes of our hearts enlightened, we may know what is the HOPE to which God has called us. (Ephesians 1:17-18)

### **SING TO THE LORD A NEW SONG**

Friends, I don't know about you, but I have about reached my limit of disruption, disappointment, grief and uncertainty. Our lives, our churches, our ministries, our communities, our world have been turned upside down. The dislocation and abrupt, forced adaptation have been overwhelming.

We have been driven to our computer screens, social distancing, on-line worship, and mask wearing by the coronavirus pandemic. We have been driven to our streets and knees in anguish and repentance by the George Floyd killing and the renewed cries to dismantle racism in all our institutions. We have been driven to frustration and renewed disappointment by the lingering uncertainty and unresolved division within our denomination by the postponement of General and Jurisdictional Conferences. We have been driven to spiritual and emotional exhaustion by the demands of a "new normal," that is anything but normal. We grieve the loss of church as we have known it, even as we struggle to fan the tender embers of a new church yearning to be born. And, our grief is compounded by the death of those struck down by COVID-19 and the Dakotas-Minnesota Area dear family members and colleagues whose ministries and witness we honor this day. I know we are in a liminal, divergent time, but honestly, I find myself often longing for the familiarity of a more linear, less complex season, if only for a respite.

In the midst of our being overwhelmed by disruption, death, disappointment and despair, God speaks to us through the prophet Isaiah: "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing praise to God from the end of the earth!" (Isaiah 42:10a)

Isaiah knew what he was talking about. He was speaking to his people exiled in Babylon. He was speaking to a refugee people forced into slavery. He was speaking to a people beaten down by the ruthless separation of families, the slaughter of innocent children, the destruction of their culture. He was speaking to a people worn down by despair; a people who had lost hope; a people being bombarded by tragedy and death.

And, Isaiah is speaking to us today. The message is clear: "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing praise to God from the end of the earth."

We are able to "sing to the Lord a new song" because God is in the business of bringing the captives' home. God is in the business of healing the people's wounds. God is in the business of wiping away the tears of grief. God is in the business of raising the dead. God is in the business of creating something new out of chaos and confusion. The reason for striking up a "new song" in this liminal and divergent season is because God has already promised to deliver us, to never let us go, to hold us in the palm of God's hand and to lift us up as on eagle's wings. The only appropriate response to God's promise, made fully known to us in Jesus' resurrection, is to "sing to the Lord a new song." The new thing God is doing in our lives, in our churches, in our denomination, in our communities demands a new song. A resurrection demands a new voice. The new creation demands we live the hope to which we have been called.

### **BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

Isaiah reminded his exiled people that the hope to which God had called them – the song they were to sing anew – was that they were to be the light to the world. Isaiah called Israel to let their good works shine and illuminate a dark, chaotic world.

Jesus echoed this same calling for his followers in his Sermon on the Mount. He teaches us that we are to live hope by “letting your light shine before people so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14) Jesus does another one of those great inversion things. He is the light of the world. But, now he tells his disciples, “You are the light of the world.” Or as Eugene Peterson paraphrases it in *The Message*: “We are here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in this world.”

And Jesus meant the entire world. It is no mistake he told his disciples to not hide their light under a basket. It is no mistake Jesus told his disciples to be his witnesses beyond Jerusalem – “in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8). From the beginning, Jesus knew we would have a tendency to cling to what we already know, to gravitate toward Jerusalem, to limit our witness to one hour on Sunday morning with people we already know, to become captives to our preferences and to settle for what makes us comfortable.

Let there be no mistake what the scriptural imperatives are for being the light and living hope in the world. Hold on; here is what it looks like for Isaiah. This is going to sound a lot like what you have been saying and hearing on the streets of Minneapolis/St. Paul and hundreds of other cities around the world since the George Floyd killing. Are you ready?

- Break the chains of injustice.
- Get rid of exploitation in the workplace.
- Free the oppressed.
- Cancel debts.
- Share your food with the hungry.
- Invite the homeless poor into your homes.
- Put clothes on the shivering ill-clad.
- Be available to your own families.
- Stand with those who are oppressed.

Seven hundred years later, Jesus rose to preach in his hometown synagogue in Nazareth and echoed this same call to be the light and live hope as he inaugurated his own ministry.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4: 18-19)

Isaiah’s prophecy does not end with a laundry list of what it looks like to be the light to the world. It ends with a promise from the Lord. If you do these things, Isaiah says, “then your light shall break forth like dawn ... and your light shall rise in the darkness.” (Isaiah 58:8a and 10b) It is a powerful vision, isn’t it?

Nearly every day for eight years, I have prayed that the Holy Spirit would enable this vision to break through in each of our 350 congregations in Minnesota. Even as Char and I head into Dakotas-Minnesota Area retirement, I will continue to pray that every one of our congregations will be a light rising in the darkness of injustice, hopelessness, cynicism, and sin. That every one of our congregations will be a light in the world, reaching new people and bringing them out of darkness into Christ’s marvelous, saving light. A light in the world building the capacity of Jesus-followers to love God and love neighbor. A light in the world healing the world’s brokenness. A light rising in the darkness.

### **SO THAT**

Our world has changed. And our methods of doing ministry have changed. The church can no longer rely on the traditional, attractional model of ministry. Being a leader in the church today requires a new imagination for what the church looks like and acts like. But what has not changed is our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ who are equipped and motivated to change the world.

So, I call on Peter’s images written to the small, beleaguered churches of Asia Minor to remind you – Minnesota United Methodists – who you are:

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people so that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9)

One of the most powerful and compelling phrases in all of scripture is **so that**. The prophets often urged the people to repent or remember **so that**... The gospel writers frequently concluded their reports of Jesus' teachings with the phrase, **so that**.

This little phrase, **so that**... is about alignment. We do something **so that** we get the impact or results we seek. We continue something or change something we are doing **so that** we reflect the values we hold. We take certain actions **so that** our mission and vision become our current reality. We plead with God for a clean heart **so that** our spirits are aligned with God's own Spirit. We pray the Lord's Prayer **so that** there will be alignment between the kingdom on earth and the kingdom in heaven:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

For the past eight years, the Minnesota Conference has been on a shared Journey Toward Vitality.

- We have re-aligned and focused our resources **so that** every congregation could become a vital expression of the scriptural imperatives to grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken world.
- We conducted the Reach · Renew · Rejoice campaign **so that** we could start new congregations, renew existing churches and develop a multiplication culture.
- We developed a robust clergy leadership recruitment and formation strategy, including our Eli Internship program, **so that** we could better support our clergy and call forth and equip the next generation of bold spirit-leaders.
- We launched a Breakthrough Prayer Movement **so that** all our renewal efforts would be bathed in prayer and Holy Spirit led.
- We launched generous givers and stewardship workshops and expanded our financial revenue streams **so that** we could call forth God's abundant resources for mission and remain a vital, sustainable conference in the future.
- We engaged in ministry with the poor and a variety of global health initiatives **so that** our congregations could transform their communities by welcoming all to the banquet table.
- We have invested in our camping ministries **so that** more young persons are introduced to Christ's transformative love.
- We approved an aspirational vision in June, 2019, **so that we** can become a fully inclusive conference, committed to justice and reconciliation anchored in Jesus, our Wesleyan way of life and the evangelistic task.
- We are addressing issues of systemic racism and privilege with renewed energy **so that** we can become a more diverse, inclusive expression of the kingdom of God.
- We are committed to Staying Together and Staying Strong **so that** we can make good decisions from a position of strength for all congregations on the other side of the postponed General Conference.
- We are working to leverage technology and develop on-line resources and learning platforms **so that we** can better support congregations and leaders in a new virtual world church.

Yes, the world has changed. Ministry has new, profound challenges. But, the call to leave Jerusalem and go into the world to make and equip disciples has not changed. So, remember who you are.

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation, God’s own people

**so that**

you may proclaim the mighty acts of Jesus,  
who called you out of darkness,  
into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

and calls you even again today to be the light of the world rising in the darkness.

**SAY “YES!”**

I was very close to my grandmother Ough. When I was in college, I was called to her bedside as she lay dying. At one point during my vigil, she took my hand and said to me, “God has an important thing for you to do. I want you to say yes.” She wasn’t any more specific; only “God has an important thing for you to do. Say, yes!” I have been saying yes to God ever since, because I didn’t want to miss that important thing.

My grandmother called me forth and in a very real sense “ordained” me that day. Oh, I have had boards of ordained ministry vote to approve me for ordination. I have had a bishop lay his hands on my head and set me apart for ordained ministry in the church. I have had the church elect and consecrate me as a bishop. But, it was my grandmother who placed the mantle of call upon my shoulders by requesting I always say yes!

Isn’t that what baptism is about? Saying yes! Isn’t that what being a disciple is about? Saying yes! Isn’t that what being part of a movement to spread scriptural holiness across the land is about? Saying yes! Isn’t that what ordination and consecration is about? Saying yes! Isn’t that why we have gathered in this virtual conference? To say yes again.

Our presence today is not about you or about me. It’s about God. It is about saying yes to the Lord of our lives. It is about saying yes to being the light and living hope, even when our first impulse is to say no or not yet.

Kathleen Norris in her book, *Cloister Walk*, got it correct when she wrote: “With God there is always more unfolding; that what we can glimpse of the divine is always exactly enough and never enough.” This unfolding nature of God’s will and mission is why we have the opportunity and the need to say yes, every day. So we don’t miss the important thing God, in Christ, is calling us to do. So,

I pray: Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit on your beloved people of the Minnesota Conference. Constantly bend them to your will and love for mercy, justice, and compassion. Grant them your gifts, courage and impulse to always say “yes” to being the light to the world, a beacon of hope in the darkness. I pray in the precious name of Jesus.

And, the Church said: Yes!

### **Pastoral Prayer and Lord’s Prayer**

Gracious God, we are your people, and we wish to be faithful. We gather around to hear the words of Christ once again. We come to hear the wonder, the grace, and the responsibility. We come to learn the lessons and to take it with us to empower our lives for your service and your praise. We come to be the community and then to take the community out into the world. We come to be disciples, to follow, to take heed, to be the goodness of the Kingdom in the world today. We hear seriously the statement of living as salt in the world; we seek to live as light for all to see. We wish to glorify you above all our desires. We live in communion with all the other light-bearers to show this world goodness and love in the face of all our other issues. Help us to never lose our saltiness or to hide that light. You bestow us with gifts and graces that we know and some that we only discover along the way to further the saltiness and light in the world. Let us use these to further the growth of the Kingdom here and everywhere we go. Holy God hear these and all our prayers in your

name, those spoken, those unspoken, those lifted here, those lifted in our hearts. We entrust ourselves, our lives, our ways of being to you; may we be found faithful in your eyes and in light of your teaching. We pray all these things in the name of the one who guides us still, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray together, saying...

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

**Hymn** TFWS # 2128                      Come and Find the Quiet center

### **Offering**

“You are the light of the world.” Present tense. Not when you figure it out, get your life cleaned up or pull the pieces together. You are already salt and light—gifts for the life of the world. You may choose to hide your light but you are in this world to shine. The “you” in this text is plural. It is a reminder that we cannot be disciples all by ourselves, we require community, a clump of disciples, in order to shine, to become visible signs of God’s grace and glory. We are concrete reminders of God’s power and presence, signposts of the kingdom here, now, among us. We are light to the world by our giving.

### **Prayer of Dedication**

Creator God we are grateful for the opportunity to give. We join with people around the world who give to bring light to the world. We know that our gifts, big or small, illuminates the goodness in the world. Thank you for the opportunity to spread the goodness of God through giving. Amen.

**HYMN # 593**                      Here I Am Lord

### **Benediction**

Within each of our hearts there is a most glorious light.  
Go forth, and let its spark help you understand what troubles both you and others;  
Go forth, and let its light of reason be a guide in your decisions;  
Go forth, and bring its ray of hope to those in need of help in both body and spirit, that they may find healing;  
Go forth, and fan the flames of passion to help heal our world;  
Go forth, and spread the warm glow of love, pushing back the darkness of the world;  
Go forth, and share your glorious light with the world.

### **Announcements**

- Continue prayers for the Vern Kaufert family as they mourn Vern’s recent death.
  - Graveside service Sunday 10/18 at 2pm at Oakwood
- Prayers for the family of Sharon Hess who died last weekend.
  - Service to be held next summer
- Thank you to Deanna Gorseger, Brittainy Hippen and Colton Blesi for sharing their gift of music
- The outdoor Mora worship service will not meet after this week
- Mora weekly worship services can be found on Facebook
- Ogilvie meets at 9 am Sunday mornings