

HOPE CHURCH

WEDNESDAY WORSHIP SERVICES IN LENT

March 18, 2020



EVENING PRAYERS

SERVICE OF COMMITMENT



Evening Prayers based on An Act of Commitment Service
from The Iona Community *Iona Abbey Worship Book*.

“This is a simple service of personal commitment to Jesus in response to his love. For some it will be a commitment for the first time, while for others it will be a re-commitment to the One whom they have been following as the Way, the Truth, and the Life...St. Augustine warned Christians of the 4th century not to de-capitate the Risen Christ – that is, not to separate Jesus from the rest of his Body on earth, and therefore pretend that we can love Jesus while neglecting to love our brothers and sisters...The call for commitment to Jesus is at the same time a call for commitment to all that Jesus identifies himself with. We are not to separate what God has joined together, and so an act of commitment to Jesus is at the same time an act of commitment to the brothers and sisters through the world who journey with Jesus, just as it is a commitment to the suffering and the poor of the world with whom Jesus inseparably identified himself and to caring for the earth, sea, and sky which God called into being through the Word.”

To learn more about the Iona Community, you can read their
website: iona.org.uk

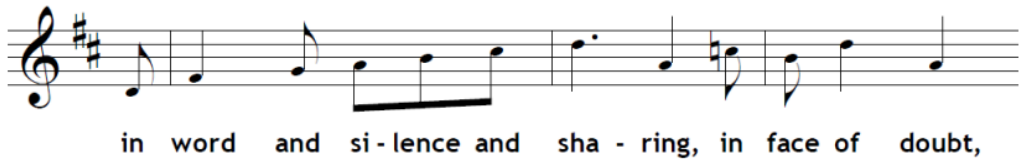


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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

CALL TO WORSHIP *The God of Heav'n*

congregation sings two times



OPENING RESPONSES

God has told us what is good;
God has told us what is right.
We are to live justly:
we are to live justly.
We are to love kindly:
we are to love kindly.
We are to walk humbly with God:
we are to walk humbly with God.

PRAYER OF APPROACH

You call us, God. You call us to walk in your way.

You show in Jesus how we should live.

You give us your Holy Spirit to keep us right.

And we are grateful.

**Love and justice are what you require of us, God –
love for you and love and justice for ourselves
and our neighbors.**

And we try. And sometimes we get it right

And sometimes we fail, But we try.

prayer continues in silence

Thank you for these words of Jesus

Which summon us and give us life:

Don't be afraid.

You are forgiven.

I call you friends.

Come and follow me.

Amen.

READING FOR CHALLENGE AND REFLECTION I Corinthians 12.1-13

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Commitment

Shared by Kim Rosenau

1 Corinthians 12: 7 “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Verse 13: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

All of us have spiritual gifts, bestowed up on by the Holy Spirit. The intention of these gifts is that they be used for the “common good.” So, our spiritual gifts should be used “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (from Micah 6: 8). This work is done within the body of believers and not in isolation. Commitment involves our “yeses” and our “noes.” Kevin (my husband) and I work together carefully, so that our “yeses” and “noes” afford us time to take care of our own individual needs for adequate physical exercise and quiet time for nurturing our souls. We also work to set aside time to spend with each other, to stay connected. As we look at our commitments, we see them as collective in many ways...my commitments are his and his commitments are mine. For us, this is part of the kinship we share in our marriage. Kevin is very knowledgeable with finances. He, by no means, has all the answers, but he is gifted in budgeting, planning and executing financial plans. We feel strongly that he is called to be part of the stewardship and finance committee at Hope Church. This is not my gift, but we are in this together, because this commitment means Kevin needs to set aside time to fulfill this commitment. I support Kevin in this.

He supports me in the same way. When I first began telling stories in our Children in Worship Program, our oldest son, Kyle, was 3. It was hard for Kyle to sit and listen to me tell stories without having himself firmly planted in my lap. So, Kevin was upstairs with Kyle for the better part of his first year, so Kyle could sit in his lap. I am an “idea” person. While I am not a “detail” person, I am surrounded by people who are gifted in that area. So, if and when one of my ideas becomes a reality, Kevin affords me the time to work with the “detail” people in my life to see the idea to fruition.

I cannot give an honest testimony to commitment in my life without confessing an almost-missed, life changing opportunity. In fact, I replay this moment quite often. The Children in Worship Program is set up to have at least 2 leaders working together in each room. One is the storyteller and the other is the doorkeeper. The story teller is, essentially, the worship leader. The doorkeeper brings the children into the worship space, monitors behavior, guides response time, and assists in a variety of ways. About 12 years, ago Jocelyn VanHeest, our

children's ministry director, came to me and shared that a woman who was fairly new to Hope Church was looking for a place for her son to serve and be connected to the congregation. In their previous church he had served in the children's ministry. Jocelyn said, "Her son is autistic. Would you be open to him trying out the job of door keeper with you?" My answer was "no." Even as I write that word, my response stings me to the core. Jocelyn, in her infinite wisdom, said, "Well, his mom would come up with him to see if this is a good fit. She would stay with you. This worked well in their previous church. Would you be willing to give it a try and if it isn't a good fit we can try something else?" This was the pivot point for me. I gave my tentative "yes" and this launched me into learning what true commitment looks like. I have always been ashamed of my initial "no" response. I have reflected on why that came out of my mouth so fast. Was it my fear of someone whose chromosomes were a bit different from my own? Was it a fear of having a man I didn't know in the room with these little children and me? Fear can make people think and do things that are not in the best interest of themselves or their community. All you need to do is go to a local grocery store and look down the toilet paper aisle to see that. Please allow me to share what my tentative commitment of "yes" taught me that day.

For the better part of six months, Marge, Michael's mom, came upstairs with Michael and participated in Children in Worship. She made sure Michael was comfortable and that I was at ease. There were certain jobs Michael was in charge of each week. He took attendance, watered the plants, cleaned up after response time, helped get the children ready for feast (the special word for our snack), and excused the children when their parents arrived to get them at the end of our worship service. These continue to be his jobs today.

The routine and quiet, Montessori style of worship and learning that take place in the Children and Worship program is conducive to Michael's unique personality. The children never see an autistic man, they just see Mr. Michael. He has connected with countless families through this program. I no longer tell stories in the room where Michael serves, but the story teller who serves there now has a wonderful connection to Michael and they have worked together for years. The Spirit of God manifests itself in Michael, allowing him to serve for the good of our congregation. He is committed to the children and families of our church and we are committed to him.

1 Corinthians 12: 7 "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Verse 13: "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

If I were to revise these verses to make them personal to me, I might say...To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For in one Spirit were all baptized into one body-blacks, whites, Hispanics, autistic, heterosexual, homosexual, wheel-chair bound, able-bodied, blind, deaf, young, old, etc.-and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Marge has taught me a lot about commitment. I don't think I have ever had to really fight for something in my life. Marge has. She has had to advocate for Michael to receive proper schooling, the opportunity to participate in athletics, access to safe housing, and the list continues. This is what commitment looks like.

While I can say, that Kevin and I work collectively on our commitments, I need to also say that we have a lot to learn about the topic. We see true commitment in many of the people we worship with at Hope Church. We see it in spouses, who tirelessly walk alongside one another in health and sickness. We see it in adult children, who make sure their aging parents receive the dignity and care they need until the day they draw their last breath. We see it in grandparents who reset the clock by adopting a little girl who has some special needs. We see it in parents who advocate for their children with special needs. We see it in public school teachers who walk into classrooms every morning where they meet needs that are beyond academic learning. We see it in a group of people who have committed to learn about the practice of Sabbath Economics, trying to live simply, so others can simply live. We see it in pastors who are willing to stand before their congregation and share the parts of themselves that feel broken and the ways those vulnerable places are being healed by reconciliation. Your names are not mentioned here, but we hope you know who you are and all you have taught us about commitment.

Before I close, please allow me to go back to Marge and Michael. Over the years, our relationship with Marge and Michael has grown beyond the walls of the Children and Worship room at Hope Church. We have a lot in common. Marge and my mom are the same age. Michael and I are two months apart in age. Michael and I were both born in Pennsylvania. That initial and tentative "yes" commitment from me and Marge's tireless commitment to stand by Michael has been blessed by God and the work of the Holy Spirit. And...while all that is enough, there is still more. In May, during the reverse offering, where people draw the names of families with children from baskets that are passed throughout the pew, to hold in prayer throughout the year, Michael reached into the basket and drew our family's name. So, for the last 10 months, Marge and Michael have committed to pray for us. We have been so blessed by their commitment. Thanks be to God.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**We believe in God
who made the sea and the earth, the sun and the sky,
who calls us to live responsibly.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ
who became human,
who healed the sick,
who talked to children,
who made friends with sinners.
He burned brightly and offended many.
His journey was one of life and death and resurrection.
His light continues to shine in darkness.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit
who inspired the scriptures,
and whose breath we breathe.**

**We believe that God calls us to be a community,
committed to one another,
offering welcome to everyone,
old and young, rich and poor,
strong and weak.**

**We believe that God calls us to be peacemakers,
workers for justice,
kin of Christ,
a light for our world. Amen.**

(written by two fourteen-year-old boys in a workshop on Iona)

INVITATION TO COMMITMENT

Consider where God may be asking you to respond with an unequivocal “yes” in your life of faith. Write that commitment on a card and place it somewhere visible as a sign and reminder.

SUNG RESPONSE *Take, O Take Me As I Am*

Take, O take me as I am: sum - mon out what I shall be:
set your seal up - on my heart and live in me.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

I invite you to join in this prayer of commitment.

We say together:

Loving God, you call me.

In the presence of your people

I make you this promise –

I will follow Jesus,

I will walk with you. Amen.

SONG *Come, O Lord and Set Us Free*

Come, O Lord and set us free; bring your peo - ple peace. —
Come, O Lord, and set us free; come, Lord Je - sus come. —

The image shows two staves of musical notation in B-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are written below the notes. A small '9' is written above the first note of the second staff.

O come and set us free,
free to affirm each other as sister and brother.

And from your deep intent, do not exempt us, O Lord,
but free us by your word.

Reshape the world you made;
let what your hand created be always celebrated.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

God has told us what is good;

God has told us what is right.

Do you believe that the Gospel commands us
to seek peace founded upon justice?

We do.

Then, will you live justly?

We will live justly.

Will you love kindly?

We will love kindly.

Will you walk with God?

We will walk with God.

The blessing of God

sure, strong and kindly

be around us

and within us

now and all the nights and day

of our journey home.

And as you go, the peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.