

VESPERS
Saturday, March 9, 2019 - 5:30 p.m.
The First Weekend of Lent

TEN MINUTES OF GATHERING MUSIC (starting at 5:20 PM)
from *Songs of Taize*

Once the music starts to play, we invite you to be in silence.

WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Marlayna Schmidt

CALL TO WORSHIP*

READER: Welcome to the Lenten season. We remember Jesus' journey from Jordan to the wilderness.

PEOPLE: **There are places of wilderness and temptation in our lives.**

READER: We remember Nazareth and Capernaum—the healings and the parables, storm-stilling, and an abundance of loaves.

PEOPLE: **We still need stories and a gentle touch. We long for peace in tumult and nourishment for deep hunger.**

READER: We remember the final days in Jerusalem—the garden and the cross and the tomb.

PEOPLE: **As we walk the path of these 40 days of Lent, may the light of their meaning guide the steps of our faith.**

OPENING PRAYER*:

Gentle God, we thank you for this Lenten time of worship.

Deepen our prayer.

Teach us to understand ourselves,

To be reconciled with one another and

To love you with profound joy.

Lead us into such simplicity of faith and honesty of spirit

That, as individual Christians and as a congregation,

We may be strengthened in temptation

And renewed in grace. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 32 **Allison Moir-Smith, Reader**

The Joy of Forgiveness

- ¹Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- ²Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
- ³While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
- ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.
- ⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
- ⁶Therefore let all who are faithful
offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters
shall not reach them.
- ⁷You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.
- ⁸I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- ⁹Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,
else it will not stay near you.
- ¹⁰Many are the torments of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.
- ¹¹Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION

REPEAT READING (*In the tradition of "Lectio Divina," another reader will repeat the above psalm, so it can be heard in "a different voice." As it is read, you are invited to listen for the words/phrases that the Spirit is calling your attention to.*)

Rev. Dr. Llewellyn Smith, Reader

ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION

MEDITATIVE READING*: A Prayer of the Heart

Allison Moir-Smith, Reader

Forgiving God—

I praise you for the covering of my sin
in soft folds of your garment of love.

I praise you for not accounting to me my iniquity,
nor letting me reckon my value by sin-lists.

I praise you for your hand heavy on me
with gentle urging to draw me out of the toxic silence
that was wasting my very body with guilt.

Forgiving God—

Empty me of my self-sufficient ways and hopes
and pour into me your spirit of repentance.

Create within me the unquenchable desire to forgive
even as I have been forgiven by you.

Lead me to the depths of my heart,
where I can ponder the nature of your holy love
And the unbelievable happiness
of freedom from sin.

Forgiving God—

Teach me the simplicity of confession
and the peace of forgiveness as a way
Of living among others.

Bridle me against the stubborn unwillingness
To listen to your guidance.

And help me always choose a posture
of prayer, reconciliation, and trust
in my relationship with others and
my joyful response to you.

ONE MINUTE OF SILENT MEDITATION

REPEAT READING *(In the tradition of Lectio Divina, another reader will repeat the above poem, so it can be heard in “a different voice.” As it is read, you are invited to listen for the words/phrases that the Spirit is calling your attention to.)*

Rev. Dr. Llewellyn Smith, Reader

LIGHTING OF VESPER CANDLES (10 minutes)

You are invited to come forward and light a candle(s) for people or situations you want to hold in the Light of God's Love.

When you light the candle feel free to whisper the name of the person(s)/situation(s) for whom you are praying.

BENEDICTION

Rev. Schmidt

If you wish, you are invited to remain in the sanctuary after the benediction and listen to the music, which will play for another ten minutes.

We invite you to leave the worship service in silence. However, Rev. Schmidt will stay in the church for a time in case you would like her to say a word of prayer with you following the service. Just let her know if you would like to pray.

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**This year our Lenten Vespers will be featuring the prayer/poems of Maren C. Tirabassi and Joan Jordan Grant, from their book, An Improbable Gift of Blessing. (Note: new and used copies can be purchased on the internet. If you have difficulty locating a copy and would like Rev. Marlayna to order one for you, please let her know.)*

First Parish Church, Congregational, United Church of Christ
In Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts

*Awaken to the Light and Love of God
Be a Joyful Beacon to our World*

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