

Greetings members and friends of First Congregational Church of Shelburne,

Attached is this week's worship resource. There have been no new prayer requests this week. **Please remember** all those who are affected by this virus and all those who put themselves in harm's way helping to combat it.

We have received inquiries concerning Easter Sunday Service and the Easter Sunday Sunrise Service. It is the decision of the church leadership to follow the directives of the CDC and our Conference and suspend all in-person worship services regardless of where they may be held. This year both the Sunrise Service and the Easter Sunday Service have been cancelled. I would encourage you to find a spot in your home, or outside, to watch the sun rise on Easter Sunday and check into our web page for a prerecorded Easter Service.

The story is told of one missionary team in the Philippines. They set up a croquet game in their front yard. After a couple of games among themselves several of their local neighbors became interested and wanted to play. After everyone was introduced, the newcomers were instructed in the fundamentals of the game. Then they were given mallets, croquet balls and turned loose on the course. If you play croquet you know that eventually there comes the moment in the game when one player has hit another player's ball and has the option to send that player's ball in any direction they wish, known as a foot shot. When this happened one of the locals was told of his opportunity to knock the other player's ball out of the court. *Why would I want to do that? To knock his ball out of the court?* the player asked. *So, you can win the game?* came the answer. *To win the game? Yes, to win the game? All by myself?* Yes. The player, clad only in a loin cloth, shook his head in bewilderment and then went right on playing ignoring the missionary's instruction. From that moment on, when a player successfully got through the wickets, he went back and gave encouragement and advice to the other players. As the final player moved toward the last wicket, the game had become a team effort. It resembled croquet only in the equipment. When the last ball made it through the last set of wickets and hit the post, the entire team shouted together, *we won! We won!* The missionaries couldn't quite grasp it. *Well, said one, I guess that's one way to do it, but it isn't croquet.* I love this story! The missionaries had just seen the perfect example of how the church works best. We take what the world offers and transforms it into a part of the Kingdom of God, where there is justice, there is love and there is humility. When that happens shouldering another's burden, another's cross, is as natural as encouraging and supporting a member of your team to get the ball through that last wicket.

My friends we are engaged, not in game, in a crisis that at the close of 2019 we had no concept of. What at first appeared to be distant this virus has brought anxiety and fear into our daily lives. We hear about those who spread mis information and others who look to profit from other's suffering. I like to believe that the majority, especially those who find fulfillment in the Christian community, are more than willing to step up, shoulder the burdens that this crisis has brought with love, justice and humility. A faithful team effort.

Welcome to Palm Sunday Worship

April 5, 2020

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

This morning is Palm Sunday. Our morning worship focuses on Jesus's entry into the City of Jerusalem and then sets the stage for Holy Week. This resource is being provided to offer a worship guide on this important day.

Prayer Requests: We are accepting requests for prayer (healing, comfort, thanksgiving and others). Please send your requests to the Pastor at pastor01089@gmail.com. Requests will then be sent out through our email list to the congregation for our common prayer life during the

week. PLEASE remember that all prayer requests received become public knowledge. If you are uncertain if your request for another might be confidential, do not send it.

Easter Sunday: We regret that our Sunday morning worship continues to be suspended for the safety and health of our people and our community. We are in the process of recording a modified Easter Sunday service that you will have access to before April 12.

And now let us be in worship

A Call to Worship Mark 11:7-10

We remember when Jesus entered Jerusalem; the disciples brought a colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting: *Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna to the Son of David!*

Unison Morning Prayer and The Lord's Prayer

All Glory and Honor be to you, O Christ! With the rising of the sun on this new day, we praise you, we welcome you, and we sing in celebration. Just as you entered the city of Jerusalem, so enter into our hearts this day and be with us in our journey through this week, for the sake of Christ who taught us to pray saying... *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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Prayers of the People

You may wish to add your own prayers for healing, prayers of thanksgiving, prayers for comfort and others. Silent prayer time for your own prayers and prayer requests is also included. The following prayer utilizes the Palm Sunday event in the past, the present and the future tense.

Let us come to God in prayer.

God of Abraham, God of Jacob, of Ruth and Rachel, God of all creation and all our history. God of what once was, what is this day, and what is yet to be born,

This day we are pulled back, held in the present, and summoned into the future. We can see, as you did see, the day of glory, the passage of your Christ through the gates of Jerusalem. We see, as you did see, the days of freedom, turn into arrest and bondage. We summon to memory, what you remember, the love and courage of Jesus. His alertness to his calling, his unbreakable allegiance to you. We can see, as you did see, the crowds and their shouting, the waving of palms, and the shadow of the cross.

This day we are also held in the present, challenged by our memory to keep our promises, honor all our pledges, and be faithful to our walk with Christ, and with each other in the present. Like the crowds, we are prone to cheer one day and walk away the next. We are often tempted to stand at the gate, and let Jesus pass us by then we turn away and return to where we have been before. In this present day, we pray for own love and courage. Our own alertness to our calling, and our own unbreakable allegiance to you

This day we are summoned into the future. We would go with Jesus, though the way is dark through this week. We would see his passion, and in so doing we would come to grips with the tears and the tragedies of our own lives. We would believe that in Jesus, there is salvation, there is healing, there is what we yearn for, to be free of all that binds us, holds us, imprisons and corrupts us. We would look into our future with hope, knowing that in all things, you are present, as you were yesterday, as you are today, as you will be tomorrow. And for this, we are grateful. Hear now, gracious God, these our prayers, the meditations of our hearts, the prayers of thanksgiving, of concern for others, for the ministries of our congregation, and for a time of wellness and wellbeing in our nation and our world (Time for silent prayer)

Hear these our prayers for those we know and love:

For healing and comfort for Mary Cromack and for her husband Ted and grandson Teddy who are now in quarantine.

For healing, For John and Sherry Taylor's neighbor, Bill Bereneson who is now in hospice and for his loving wife Kay.

For all this day who have been affected by this virus, those in isolation, those in quarantine, and those who find their livelihoods threatened. We pray for all those who are working tirelessly tending to the sick and seeking ways of comfort and cure while placing themselves in harms way. Grant them strength and courage and the knowledge that they are loved.

And so, O God, as we enter into this Holy Week, may we bring to mind the passion of your Christ even as attempt to stay together and keep our distance as your people. Amen.

Gospel Lessons:

Matthew 27:32

Mark 15:21

Luke 23:26

All four Gospels tell the story of Jesus' arrest, trails and crucifixion. They don't all include the same details. While Luke records Jesus saying, "Father, into Thy hands, I commit my Spirit!" Matthew and John do not. Of the four, only Matthew includes the scene where Pilate washes his hands before the crowds saying, "I am innocent of this man's bloods." One character that shows up in three of the four Gospels is Simon of Cyrene. Our readings this morning, from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke

are the only passages that mention him. After the readings, you may reflect on them and share your thoughts. There is a set of notes concerning these texts for your reflection.

Benediction: Romans 15:13

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

Benediction Response:

Were You There?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

*Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.*

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Notes on the text

Simon of Cyrene had just come to town. He lived in the country. Scripture says he was a “passerby.” While he stood by the side and watched the procession of soldiers, he is suddenly compelled to join this parade. Legend says that Jesus collapsed on the way to calvary. The weight of the cross was too much for him and his brutal beatings and whippings had left him bent and broken. So, the procession to Golgotha stops when Jesus falls. *Who’s going to carry the cross?* Someone has too. Not the guards. Not the Jews. Not the wailing women. *“Hey! Hey you! Yes, you! Come over here. What’s your name? Simon? good, we need you....”* And so, Simon is enlisted to bear the cross of Christ, until Jesus is nailed to it. Ironically, even though Jesus had been teaching about bearing one another’s burdens, no one volunteers to pick his up that day. Instead, a total stranger is conscripted, and as far as we know, Simon picked up that cross and carried it to the end. He did so without resistance or complaint. We might wonder if Jesus spoke to him during that awful journey. After all, the Gospel of Luke describes Jesus as being able to stop and talk with a group of weeping women. Whatever transpired, we are not to know. One thing we do know. The experience of carrying that cross changed Simon forever. He became a follower of Jesus and his family did too. Can you imagine hearing this story from Simon? *“I carried the Lord’s cross. I talked with him. I watched as he was nailed to that cross...”* This is our place of reflection today, carrying another’s burden. Carrying another’s cross. Living one’s faith. Joining the parade. Getting in the game, rather than just watching it and making comment on it. As a Christian, in these uncertain and anxious times, how are you living your faith?