

Greetings members and friends of First Congregational Church of Shelburne,

This week's Worship Resource is attached and can also be found, along with this week's video, on our web page, shelburnechurch.org. This service focuses on living together in unity as presented in Psalm 133.

Last Sunday was our first all church conversation via Zoom. These conversations seek your input concerning specific questions that your Pastoral Search Committee needs in order to complete the Church Profile. This first conversation asked questions concerning who you think God is calling to be our next pastor? This included what attributes and competencies you believe your next pastor should have. Our second all church conversation will be on Sunday, August 23, at 10 AM. The link for that meeting will arrive via email on Saturday August 22.

Your participation and contributions in these conversations will give your Pastoral Search Committee the direction they seek in discovering your next settled pastor.

Faithfully Yours,

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Sunday Worship

August 16, 2020

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

This week's Worship Resource. This morning we will be hearing Psalm 133. As Psalms go, this one is concise and to the point. The first verse presents a single truth concerning living together in unity. All the verses that follow offer illustrations of what living together in unity is like. The Sunday video for this service may be found on the church web page, shelburnechurch.org. Next Sunday there will be a Worship Resource without a video.

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.

And now let us be in worship

Morning Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

Gracious God, I thank you for being the fount of every blessing. I thank you that your blessings abound in Jesus Christ. They are mine freely because of the great price he paid. I humbly receive your blessings for this day as I continue to walk with you and I ask that your love fills me, and your strength sustains me in every need I face. I desire above all, the greatest blessing of all, the blessing of your daily presence and even more, O God, as you bless me make me a blessing to others in the name of Christ who taught me 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

Today's prayers are centered on God's diverse creation and our unity in Christ. You may wish to add your own prayers for healing, prayers of thanksgiving, prayers for comfort and others during our time of meditation.

Let us come to God.

God of Love and Lord of All, we, your people, revel in the wonders of your creation, in its rich diversity, its astounding mystery and the way in which it is interconnected and interdependent. And like your creation, O God, we live in diversity while yearning for community, where we may be one, interconnected and interdependent. Make of us, O God, one part of the body of Christ. That our ministry here, in this place, may be one of love, one of hope one of justice, and one that reaches far beyond ourselves. May we discover our common and mutual calling with other parts of the body of Christ, that in unity with them, we may touch the lives of more of your people and make a larger difference in your creation.

Make of us, O God, one voice that speaks of you, tells the story of your Christ, and shares the experiences of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May our voice be added to others who know you, who walk with you, who live the life you have called them to. While there may be many different faithful paths, there is only one calling, to speak of your love and to show your love in what we say and what we do. May we be one in living out this call. Make of us, O God, one community that has many members, each called to ministry in some way. May our ministries of worship, prayer, music, care and nurture, mission, and hospitality bear much fruit in our unity of purpose. Make of us, O God, one household of your love, where all are welcome and valued, and shown respect and love. And now, here these our varied prayers, united in the desire to speak with you, and bring ourselves into your holy presence.....

Gracious and loving God, keep us mindful of your desires for your people that we may be a blessing to those around us and in so doing bring a unity of purpose and a harmony of mind and heart to our community. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 133, The Blessing of Unity

The Book of Psalms contains 150 Psalms. It is a collection composed from older lyrics for use in the temple in Jerusalem. Most were probably composed to accompany worship and include Praise Hymns, Hymns of Kingship, Hymns of Zion, the Holy City, Hymns of Lament and Hymns of Thanksgiving. There are also Psalms about sacred history and wisdom. This morning's Psalm is about the blessing of unity.

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there, the LORD ordained his blessing, life forevermore.

After the reading, you may reflect on this passage and share your thoughts.
There is a set of notes concerning this text for your reflection.

Benediction:

May God give us light to guide us
Courage to support us
and love to unite us,
Now and evermore, Amen.

Notes on the text

The Dr. Pepper jingle if written by the psalmist:

*I'm a blessing, He's a blessing, She's a blessing, We're a blessing,
Wouldn't you like to be a blessing too?* Well, not exactly the psalm, But it's close.

In pondering over this psalm this week, it occurred to me that we are probably more familiar, and perhaps more comfortable, with talking about how God blesses us, *Come thou fount of every blessing, We gather together to asks the lord's blessing, Bless the lord, O my soul, and remember God's benefits.....Blessed are the meek, the merciful, those who mourn, the peace makers...* God's blessings are deep and wide and often taken for granted. Every day we travel 1,599,793 miles through space at a little better than 67,000 miles an hour. I doubt we are overly concerned about this, and probably don't thank God that we made it through another day racing through the solar system. On one hand the big cosmic stuff escapes us, on the other, the personal stuff does not when it comes to receiving God's blessing:

In Traverse City, Michigan one teenager has had enough. She is disgusted with her old-fashioned parents who overreacted to her nose ring, cannot stand the music she listens to and is not thrilled with her choice of wardrobe. So, she runs away to Detroit, and there, in the city she meets a man who drives the biggest car she has ever seen. The man with the big car offers her a job, tending to the needs of his clientele of businessmen. She has no problem with being in the escort business and things seem good for a while. But, before she knows it, the man with the big car tosses her out on the street without a penny to her name. She still turns a couple of tricks a night, and all the money goes to support her drug habit. One night while sleeping on the metal grates of the city, she has had enough of her new lifestyle. Through her tears she meekly prays, "*God, why did I leave? My dog back home lives better than I do. Help me*" And then, in that moment, it comes to her. She knows that more than anything in the whole world, she wants to go home. Three straight calls home get three straight connections with the answering machine. She hangs up each time. Finally, she gets up her courage and leaves a message. "*Mom, Dad, it's me. I was wondering about maybe coming home. I'm catching a bus up your way, and it'll get there about midnight tomorrow. If you're not there, I'll understand.*" During the seven-hour bus ride, she prepares a speech for her father. And when the bus comes to a stop in the Traverse City station, the driver announces the fifteen-minute lay over before the

bus leaves. Fifteen minutes to decide her life. *Do I get off? Or not?.....I get off.* She walks into the terminal not knowing what to expect. But not one of the thousand scenes that have played out in her mind prepares her for what she sees. There in the bus terminal in Traverse City, Michigan, stands a group. A group of forty brothers and sisters, great-aunts and uncles, cousins, a grandmother, and a great-grandmother. They are all wearing goofy party hats. Blowing noisemakers. Taped across the entire wall of the terminal is a computer-generated banner that reads – Welcome home! And out of that group steps her Dad. She stares out through the tears in her eyes and begins her memorized speech. He interrupts her. *“Hush, child. We’ve got no time for that. No time for apologies. Can’t you see? We’ll be late. There’s a big party is waiting for you at home.”* I am sure that young lady recognized what just happened to her for what it was, A blessing, One of the large and very personal variety. And what a blessing it was. When I look at Psalm 133, yes, it is about God’s blessings. In the Gospels it is all about the blessing of Jesus Christ. But there is more. There is that call to be a blessing. And I think that is the scary part, we are comfortable with God’s blessings. The benefits of God’s unconditional love, regardless of who we are, or where we have been, or what we have done. After all, God is God.... It is assumed God can step over most any issue and rescue us, save us, shower us with blessings. But to be a blessing? To be like that girl’s father. Like that girl’s entire family. They are a blessing, Living out the love of God. What about me? What about you? Are we a blessing? There are any number of ways we can be a blessing. Our psalm does give one suggestion that God’s people might consider when it comes to being a blessing. *How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!* Apparently, when we do that, we are a blessing. *I'm a blessing, He's a blessing, She's a blessing, We're a blessing, Wouldn't you like to be a blessing too?*