

Greetings members and friends of First Congregational Church of Shelburne,

Attached is the Sunday Worship Resource for May 10. I hope to get a Sunday morning YouTube video up in time to view with this resource. If it happens, it will be posted on our web page.

This Sunday, Mother's Day, is both a celebration and a moment for reflection. One of my professors in Seminary said that there are four great vocations: Teaching, Preaching, Nursing and his number one? Motherhood. Since that time 40 years ago vocations, especially for women, are radically different. The models of family and parenting have also changed significantly. Given the current crisis, these are transforming once again as we learn to thrive within an unexpected and challenging environment. This year, I am sure you will remember your mother, your parents, grandparents, and all those who supported and loved you in life.

Our focus for this Sunday is all about the Gospel image of the living vine of Jesus Christ and the followers of Christ as the branches. It is a wonderful image for this time of year when Spring finally arrives.

Please remember we include prayer requests every week. Any requests may be sent to me at pastor01089@gmail.com.

And there is a new Chapel Moment. Click on the link on our web page.

God be with you,
Pastor Rob

Welcome to Sunday Worship May 10, 2020

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

While we may be distant from each other, we are still in full contact with God's wider creation. The month of May is one for clearing the way for planting and enjoying the rebirth of the land. This week's Worship Resource uses the Gospel image of Jesus as the living vine and all those who follow are the branches.

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.

Chapel Moments videos: We are posting Chapel Moments videos on our web page, shelburnechurch.org. as often as possible. These are brief moments that include prayer, scripture, reflection, and music.

And now let us be in worship

A Call to Worship

From the ends of the earth, God calls us together; the rich and the poor, the joyful and those filled with sorrow, the loved and the unloved, all are gathered in the one household of God's kingdom. Let us praise the Lord.

Morning Prayer & Lord's Prayer

O God, creator of all, the sun and the stars, the mountains and valleys, we your children, come to you offering our thanks and seeking your presence and your healing. Be among us this morning as we greet this new day and this new week. Hold us close as we live and grow in Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, 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 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 during our time of meditation. This morning's prayers are a collection of four prayers in honor of Mother's Day. Two are by Teresa of Calcutta, known to us as Mother Teresa and two prayers are from Margaret Cropper. There are notes concerning these two women and their prayers following the order of service.

Let us come to God in prayer.

Dearest Lord, may I see you today and every day in the those who are sick and while nursing them, minister to you. Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognize you and say, "Jesus, how sweet it is to serve you." Sweetest Lord make me appreciative of the dignity of my high vocation and its many responsibilities. Never permit me to disgrace it by giving way to coldness, unkindness, or impatience. Lord, increase my faith, bless my efforts and work, now and for evermore.

O God, the parent of all, you ask every one of us to spread love where the poor are humiliated, joy where the church is brought low and reconciliation where people are divided; father against son, mother against daughter, husband against wife, believers against those who cannot believe, Christians against their unloved fellow Christians. You open this way for us, so that the wounded body of Christ, your church, may be the leaven of communion for the poor of the earth and in the whole human family. Amen

Lord, let me be with you, wherever you are crucified today, wherever the will of man crosses the will of God: for being God and man, you are stretched out on the cross of God's purpose, and our rebellion. Where the will to use armed force crosses God's will for peace, where lying and corruption cross God's will for truth, where greed and possessiveness cross the use of God's plenty, where we live not for others but for ourselves, where ugliness and disease cross

the will of God for beauty and well-being, there let us find you, on the cross, and there let us be with you, and bring about with you, in union with your sacrifice, that redemption, which you are accomplishing in your passion.

Now, into the keeping of Thee, O God, I put all doing of today. All disappointments, hindrances, forgotten things, negligence's, all gladness and beauty, love, delight, achievement. All that people have done for me, all that I have done for them, my work and my prayers. And I commit all the people whom I love to Thy shepherding, to Thy healing and restoring, to Thy calling and making, Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hear now these our prayers of praise, our prayers of thanksgiving, our prayers on the behalf of others and for ourselves, And in our prayers, may we hear your voice
And find your peace.....(personal prayer and meditation time).

Gracious God, who loves us and all the rest,
We know that all things are possible with you. Amen.

Gospel Lesson: John 15:1-8, The Vine

Our Gospel lesson for today takes place during Jesus' final days with his disciples. At this time, Jesus is trying to assure his follows that they will not be cut off from him even though he will be arrested and executed. In doing so he uses the familiar image of the vine as he illustrates that all who love him are a part of that living vine that connects them not only to his love, but to God's love as well.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

Here ends the reading from
The Gospel of John

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: *In the Bulb There is a Flower* Gary Freeland

In the bulb there is a flower; In the seed, an apple tree; In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see. Amen.

Notes on Teresa of Calcutta and Margaret Cropper

Teresa of Calcutta

In 1928, at the age of 18, Gonxha Agnes received the name Sister Mary Teresa when she entered the Sisters of Loreto, in Ireland. In December of that year she departed for India, arriving in Calcutta. There she began teaching at St. Mary's School for girls. Her ministry would continue in India until her death in 1997. Noted for her charity, unselfishness, courage and her capacity for hard work with a natural talent for organization. Mother Teresa lived out her consecration to Jesus, in the midst of her companions, with fidelity and joy.

Our first prayer is her daily devotion.

Margaret Cropper

Born a Quaker in England, in 1886, Margaret was particularly concerned over the plight of young women. During the Great War she worked to improve conditions for the girls in the munition's factories. Following the war, in the 1920's, she went to South Africa to help her friends working there for the church. She was involved with the Girls Friendly Society most of her life. A fine poet, author and composer, Margaret wrote numerous books, hymns and prayers. She was called home to the Lord in 1980.

Notes on the text

Jesus is speaking these words to his disciples, they are his primary audience, and as a secondary audience, Jesus is speaking to all those who will believe in him and will come after them. That would include you and me. In this specific context, Jesus is talking about the disciple's relationship to him both in the present and in the future. *I am the vine. You are the branches. Bear much fruit, Abide in my love.* Jesus is the living vine and the disciples are the branches. That is specific, it's personal, communal and relational and it begs the question are we branches of the living vine of Christ? Is our relationship to Jesus like that?

When I explore this question with others, I have found that I usually get one of four responses.

The first is the famous and most popular, the irrelevant response. It goes something like this: "enough with all this talk about living in Christ, of knowing and walking with Jesus, it does not interest me, it is not in my personal experience, it does not speak to my life or my life-style. What I need to hear about today, are the issues in my community and my world. This being a part of the vine of Christ is not relevant to me or my life." One of my professors said about this point of view, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It hasn't been tried."

The next response I often get when talking about being a part of the vine of Christ, is that it lacks the ability to have a positive impact on the society. That one goes something like this, "that's all fine and good that you can have a relationship with the lord, you can have a prayer life, you can sing your songs, regale us with pipe organ, chamber orchestra, and play your guitars, but, how does that effect any meaningful change in the world?" Of course, the converse of this one, and the reason why this response is common, is the comment received from one older woman, in one congregation, when she learned I was a pastor. "I want to tell you" she said to me "that Christianity is just loving the lord. I don't think it is necessary to do any of that social action

stuff. I think the church should stick to spiritual things and stay out of politics. as long as you believe in Jesus and don't do anything to out and out hurt other people. That's what matters.

I don't think it is important what you think about people in other churches, or religions or from other countries. Yes, it bothers me that people are hungry in Africa, but I don't think I should have to feed them. The price of bread is already too high. Preachers should stay out of those things and preach the bible." Given that sort of sentiment, it is no wonder many believe all Christians share it. Most of time, I don't respond to this response. If pushed, I can let loose a barrage of how many people have been touched by the mission ministries of the churches I have served and the United Church of Christ in general. Has that made a difference in our society? I would say that every person we have welcomed, every box of food that goes out to the hungry, every meal delivered, socks, coats, hats and gloves handed out, and that is just for starters, has made a difference.

The third response I often receive concerning being a part of the vine of Christ I call the oxymoron argument. It goes like this: "I can be a good Christian without being a part of any community." Of course, I imagine that I am now preaching to the choir with this one, you are engaged in the ministries of your church community. Even in this time of crisis and distance, your experience in the Body of Christ offers each of us a place of support, and love. I would suggest that to be a branch of the vine of Christ, to bear much fruit. is to be in community with other Christians. a Christian hermit is an oxymoron. The first thing Jesus did when he started his ministry was to gather a community around him. It's been that way ever since.

The fourth response I get when I speak about the living vine of Christ, goes something like this, "let me share with you my experience with the vine of Christ, when I was lost and alone, when I was deep in sorrow, when I was on the bottom of the barrel of life with no-where to go, the church was there for me, their love lifted me, held me, brought me in from the cold, walked with me through the storm. I have experienced the living vine of Christ, the love of Christ, the peace of Christ, through the ministry of the branches of his living vine. and that has made all the difference in my life." We are called to be the branches of the living vine of Christ. In your life, what does that mean?