



Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Sunday, May 2nd, 2021

Dear Lake Toxaway family and friends,

Jesus calls us to abide in His presence in the reading from John today. While the imagery of a vine is presented by Jesus, the phrase "abide in me as I abide in you" catches my attention.

From this phrase, I begin to ask questions. How do we abide in Jesus? How do we encourage each other to abide in Christ? What does abide mean? I suspect all of you have answers and thoughts about how we can cultivate the ability or the tendency and desire to abide in Christ.

I want to offer three simple suggestions: silence, music, focus.

Silence is a good practice, but it is difficult for many of us. I plan our worship services with moments of silence and reflection with intentionality. Silence is a place where God takes control, where we surrender ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit and the voice of God.

Sometimes I hear comments from myself thinking silence is a distraction or a waste of time. Sometimes I revel in the moments of silence in worship and am reluctant to return to other parts of the worship service. Whatever we think about silence, I invite us to say the simple prayer of many followers of Jesus, "speak Lord, your servant is listening."

Second, though it might sound opposite, music can be a way to abide in Christ. We fill ourselves up with sound instead of silence. This is Friday morning, and I am sitting at the table on our screen porch sitting in quietness, yet the sound of wind fills my ears. It is a sound that invites me into a deeper communion with Christ. The music can be the organ or singing. What is important is not simply to get through the music, but to dwell in it, to let it wash over you, to let our lives be lost in the sounds and the words. Read the words of the hymns as you sing. Lean into the moment and be alive to what God might do in our worship.

These first two are instances of surrendering, of setting aside and entering the moment. The third one is different: it is a heightening of focus. It is attention to the Word. We are invited to listen to scripture as the very words of Jesus. Scripture contains important words we need to hear, instructions on how to live fully and deeply in a complicated and sometimes threatening world. I invite us to try to hear the words of scripture not as words we have heard many times but as words of life we need today.

We are practicing abiding in Christ as we worship together with the hope it will continue after the benediction is pronounced and the postlude ends. We are cultivating habits for week-long and life-long worship as we gather for worship, whether in person or by virtual means.

And as we observe silence, music, and focus, I pray we find ourselves with opportunities to share the Good News as Philip shared in the lesson from Acts. Remember, invite your new neighbors and familiar friends to come to church with you. We are a worshipping community which seeks to serve Jesus in our community. We do it not because it is a good thing. We do it because Jesus has redeemed us and offered love to us and invited us to love our brothers and sisters.

Faithfully,

Marcus

**Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Community Worship Service
Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 2nd**

9:30 A.M. Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/QgXC8hUhHbU>

PRELUDE

The Gift of Love arr. John Carter

GREETING

God is the True Vine,

And we are the branches.

Connected to God.

Connected to bear fruit!

Connected to God.

Or we wither away.

Connected to God.

Or useless!

We come to worship God, who is the True Vine.

God, teach us how to remain connected so that we might bear good fruit!

HYMN #98

To God be the Glory

Located in the back of the bulletin - (Printed w/ permission)

OPENING PRAYER

Vine-grower, during this time of worship, we come to grow and learn. You offer us life, nourish us, and create a space to thrive. May our worship draw us closer to you. Shape and form our hearts and minds as we hear your word, sing your praises, and seek your guidance through prayer. Strengthen us to bear good fruit today and in the days to come. Draw us closer to you in this morning's worship in the name of the one who proclaimed, I am the vine, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

***Acts 8:26-40**

** During Eastertide a reading from Acts is often substituted for the lesson from the Hebrew Bible.*

- 8:26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.)
- 8:27 So, he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship
- 8:28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.
- 8:29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it."
- 8:30 So, Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"
- 8:31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.
- 8:32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth.
- 8:33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."
- 8:34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"
- 8:35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.
- 8:36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"
- 8:38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.
- 8:39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.
- 8:40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Psalm 22:25-31 *(Please read responsively the bold text)*

22:25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

22:26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever!

22:27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.

22:28 For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

22:29 To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.

22:30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord,

22:31 and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

1 John 4:7-21

4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

4:8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

4:9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.

4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

4:11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.

4:12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

4:13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

4:14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.

4:15 God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God.

4:16 So, we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.

4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.

- 4:19 We love because he first loved us.
- 4:20 Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.
- 4:21 The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

John 15:1-8

- 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.
- 15:2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.
- 15:3 You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.
- 15:4 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.
- 15:5 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.
- 15:6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.
- 15:7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
- 15:8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

L: This is the word of the Lord for the people of Christ.

P: Thanks be to God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

(Let us offer our silent confessions.)

We thank you, gracious God, for Jesus Christ the true vine, with his roots eternally grounded in you. We rejoice that by grace we have been grafted into him, to be branches on a vine which bears the loveliest of all the fruits of earth. Yet we confess that all is not well with the way we live.

Please forgive us for the occasions when we have been the ones to introduce disease into the vine, preferring its contamination to the vigor of health. Forgive us for neglecting to draw deeply on the sap of Life, for our tendency to wander instead of growing on the framework you provide, for being content, and sometimes even proud of, a few sparse or undersized fruits, for

the apathy which lets us to go through some seasons without bearing any fruit.

Have mercy on us. Please do not lose patience or sever us completely from the true vine. Rather heal our diseases, discipline and train our wandering tendrils, prune our unfruitful branches and cut away our diseased ones. May we remain in Christ and he in us, through all the changing seasons of life. Let us delight in bearing the fruits of love which are our true purpose and joy. For your Name's sake. Amen!

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Jesus said: "If you reside in me, and my words reside in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you." Friends, we have asked for forgiveness and correction. It has been truly done for us. It is being done for us. And it will be done for us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HOMILY

STATEMENT OF FAITH (United Church of Canada)

***We are not alone,
we live in God's world.***

***We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.***

We trust in God.

***We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.***

***In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.***

***We are not alone.
Thanks be to God. Amen.***

GLORIA PATRI (UMH #70)

***Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen. Amen.***

OFFERING

<https://www.wnccumc.org/online-donations-to-churches>

OFFERTORY

Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee arr. Emma Lou Diemer

DOXOLOGY

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

***God of the far-flung universe and God who is closer than our own heartbeat:
we long to dwell in your closeness, abiding in you and you abiding in us.
However, the call to abide in other places is strong: to abide in the world of
popularity and acceptance or in the world of increasing wealth and power
centered around our own wants and desires. As we offer our gifts and
ourselves to you, help us turn away from other calls and abide in that place
of heart's deepest desire: in your Son, Jesus, and he in us. In Christ, we pray.
Amen.***

PASTORAL PRAYER AND PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER

***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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.***

CLOSING HYMN #408

The Gift of Love
Located in the back of the bulletin - (Printed with permission)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart arr. Robert Hobby

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Partners for 2021 – 2022 Scholars

A huge thank you to Cathie Fussell and the entire Scholarship Committee for all the hard work with interviewing, selecting and matching scholars with one of you during the 2020-2021 school year.

If you are interested in being a **partner** (formally known as a sponsor/mentor) for a future scholar recipient, please reach out to Judy Leffler at judylefler1@gmail.com.

2020 Tax Letters/Giving Statements

The 2020 tax deadline to file has been extended to May 2021. 2020 Giving Statements were mailed in February and if you have not received yours, please reach out to Don McSwain, our Treasurer via email at bgamedon@gmail.com.

PRAYER CONCERNS OF THE COMMUNITY

Please pray for Chad & Anne Zimmerman, Marty Young, Jan Crocker, Thomas Blackstock, Katherine Jeter, Marcus' nephew Steven Hudson, Cathie Fussell's nephew, Jeff Tilley, Madison Coleman & the Jeter family, Conor, Cynthia Wood's friends' two-year-old son, Frank Hardin, Bill Holden & Hazel Fisher

Please pray for those with illness, upcoming surgery and recovery. Please pray for them and their recoveries.

Please continue to pray for those who have had the death of a loved one in the recent weeks and months.

Please pray for all student scholars as they are finishing their school year.

Please pray for Molly Cammack, one of our student scholars. "I am in the process of applying for a very exciting education opportunity! Please keep me in your prayers!"

STAFF & LAY VOLUNTEERS

Pastor: Marcus Dodson: 828-553-0282, marcus61dodson@gmail.com

Organist: Charlie Steele: cwsorgan@comporium.net

Church Administrator: Saunders Grommesh, 469-569-2314, administrator@laketoxawayumc.org

Lay Leaders: Barbara Kline: 828-862-5585 and Paula Markert: 828-553-9434

Audio/Visual for Livestream Chair: Andy Harvill

Liturgist: John Leffler

98 To God Be the Glory

1. To God be the glo - ry, great things He hath done; So loved He the
 2. O per - fect re - demp - tion, the pur - chase of blood, To ev - 'ry be -
 3. Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done, And great our re -

world that He gave us His Son, Who yield - ed His life an a -
 liev - er the prom - ise of God; The vil - est of - fend - er who
 joic - ing thro' Je - sus the Son; But pur - er, and high - er, and

tone - ment for sin, And o - pened the life - gate that all may go in.
 tru - ly be - lies, That mo - ment from Je - sus a par - don re - ceives.
 great - er will be Our won - der, our vic - t'ry, when Je - sus we see.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice! Praise the Lord,

praise the Lord, Let the peo - ple re - joice! O come to the Fa - ther, thro'

Je - sus the Son, And give Him the glo - ry, great things He hath done.

WORDS: Fanny J. Crosby, 1820-1915
 MUSIC: William H. Doane, 1832-1915

TO GOD BE THE GLORY
 11.11.11.11. with Refrain

The Gift of Love

1. Though I may speak with bravest fire,
 2. Though I may give all I possess,
 3. Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,

and have the gift to all inspire,
 and striving so my love profess,
 our spirits long to be made whole.

and have not love, my words are vain,
 but not be given by love within,
 Let inward love guide every deed;

as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.
 the profit soon turns strangely thin.
 by this we worship, and are freed.

WORDS: Hal Hopson, 1972 (1 Cor. 13:1-3)
 MUSIC: Trad. English melody; adapt. by Hal Hopson, 1972

GIFT OF LOVE
 LM