



Grace United Methodist Church

April 18, 2021

OUR WELCOMING STATEMENT

God's love is for all and God's grace is present in all creation. God's spirit draws us into community. We are filled with genuine care and love for one another.

Honoring the diversity of our faith journeys, our welcome is extended to all – people of all races, sexes, ethnic backgrounds, generations, physical and mental abilities, economic conditions, sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. No matter who you are, no matter where you are in your life, you are welcome here.

We are all invited to bless this church with our love, our presence, and our participation.

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND GREETING ONE ANOTHER

CALL TO WORSHIP

O God, fount of every blessing,
there are times when we are prone
to wander from you and your love.

**We give thanks that your love
is there sustaining us
in times when our passion
for you is diminished.**

Through this time together,
**revive our hearts for your ministry
in the name of Jesus Christ.**

OPENING HYMN

UMH 400

"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

OPENING PRAYER

Holy God, we come seeking to feel spiritually refreshed and revived. As we explore how to renew our own spiritual vitality and that of the church, make us aware of your presence among us. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Revelation 2:1a, 2a, 4-5a

Write this to the angel of the church in Ephesus...I know your works, your labor, and your endurance...But I have this against you: you have let go of the love you had at first. So remember the high point from which you have fallen. Change your hearts and lives and all the things you did at first.

SERMON

Pastor Nate Nims

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE PRAYER JESUS TAUGHT

Generous One, you have woven our lives together like family. Teach us how to live faithfully with one another as kin: Recognizing the need of any one as our own need. Refusing to be passive before systems that harm. Choosing to live generously, rejecting impulses to hoard or possess, let your Spirit be our guide that we may know and live with the depths of love, grace, and peace. All this we pray through Christ, who taught us to pray saying, **Our God (Father, Mother, Creator) 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.

OFFERING

If you have not yet made your pledge for 2021, you can do so at:

<https://gracedesmoines.org/2021-stewardship-campaign/>

CLOSING HYMN

W&S 3056

"Jesus, the Light of the World"

Guide to Prayer and Study: April 19-24

Monday, April 19

Read - 2 Kings 10:15, Romans 14:1-4

Notice - John Wesley's "Catholic Spirit" sermon asked: "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? ... Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences." (He used the root meaning of "catholic" – "including many different types of thing; universal." John Wesley did not mean the Roman Church, which in his day was a denomination that did not love Christians who thought differently.) Wesley taught us much about a "Catholic Spirit," but he did not originate this way of thinking and living. Jehu, newly anointed King of Israel, needed to defeat Ahab's family, who urged Israel to worship false gods. Meeting Jehonadab, Jehu asked: "Are you as committed to me as I am to you?" (i.e., "Do we share the same ultimate goal?"—2 Kings 2:15). (Jeremiah 35 said Jehonadab founded a family faithful to God, though some of their religious practices were not common in Israel.) How can it strengthen God's work, and our own walk with God, when we and others focus on essentials we agree on more than on small differences that divide us? God made each person unique and wonderful (cf. Psalm 139:14). Paul reminded the Roman Christians that since each person is unique, each person's spiritual journey is, too. Encouragement and accountability are vital for spiritual growth, but comparing others to ourselves and judging them is dangerous and destructive. How can you best help others on their personal journey of "knowing, loving, and serving God and others," without comparing or judging it by yours? Who has helped you in that way?

Pray - Jesus, your family is large and diverse. Give me your spirit of non-judgmental love (John 3:17), so that differences that do not bother you will not bother me either. Amen.

Tuesday, April 20

Read - Ephesians 4:1-6

Notice - While Ephesians called on all Christ-followers to "accept each other with love," Edwin Prince Booth wrote that John Wesley's father, Samuel, and his family "were exiled from their parishes or put in prison because of their obstinacy, their logic and their vigor." His family's history no doubt made John aware of the ways human inequity and harassment based on religious differences can damage Christ's cause. In his "Catholic Spirit" sermon, Wesley said, "I do not mean, 'Embrace my modes of worship,' or, 'I will embrace yours.' ... We must both act as each is fully persuaded in his own mind I believe the Episcopal form of church government to be scriptural and apostolical. If you think the Presbyterian or Independent is better, think so still, and act accordingly. I

believe infants ought to be baptized; and that this may be done either by dipping or sprinkling. If you are otherwise persuaded, be so still, and follow your own persuasion.” How did his approach make the humility, gentleness, patience, love and unity Ephesians called for a practical reality in his day? How would it strengthen God’s Kingdom today if more of us adopted that same attitude to areas of difference?

Pray - God, free me from the emotional blocks which blind me to people, and that make me argumentative, judgmental and unloving. I want this “Catholic Spirit” that you, Paul and John Wesley had. Amen.

Wednesday, April 21

Read - Ephesians 6:1-4

Notice - British politician and historian Augustine Birrell wrote that Wesley’s mother was “cast in a mold not much to our minds nowadays. She had nineteen children and greatly prided herself on having taught them, one after another, by frequent chastisements to—what do you think? to cry softly.” But in keeping with the wisdom of Ephesians, there was also love: “Though a stern, forbidding, almost an unfeeling, parent, she was successful in winning and retaining not only the respect but the affection of such of her huge family as lived to grow up.” Today we call it the “nature/nurture” question. When children lead fruitful, effective lives (as John Wesley did), how much of that is inborn and would emerge regardless of how they are raised, and how much is taught and modeled by parents or other key people? What good things can you see in your own life that you believe came from your home of origin? Are there ways you’ve had to overcome factors from your background?

Pray - Jesus, for the positives from nature and nurture in my life, I’m thankful. For any negatives, I pray for your continued work in my life to keep healing me, turning my vulnerabilities into blessings for your kingdom. Amen.

Thursday, April 22

Read - Psalm 68:3-6

Notice - At one point, John Wesley’s parents refused to live together for 12 months, because they disagreed on who ought to be king of England. Like many of us, Wesley bore scars from his flawed family. He loved his parents, but he put his ultimate trust in God, who said through the psalmist that he is the uniquely reliable parent for even the orphaned or lonely. When, in either a brief crisis of loneliness or over a longer time (even a lifetime), have you turned to God for nurture and comfort? In what ways did God provide you the “family” you needed? Part of our faith heritage from John Wesley is the faith that we are God’s voice, God’s hands and feet, in a hurting world. In what ways can you join in God’s work of blessing orphans, widows, the lonely and prisoners? Do you know anyone

who may not be an “orphan” or “widow” in the concrete sense of the term, but who you could bless by extending God’s love and care?

Pray - God, I thank you for the gift of this day. Help me to live this day as a gift from your hand, to let your light shine through me and to thank you for the privilege of being alive. Amen.

Friday, April 23

Read - Zechariah 3:1-4

Notice - In 1709, a fire in the Wesley’s home trapped John, age 5 ½, on the second floor. A brave neighbor rescued him by standing on another man’s shoulders just before the roof fell in. From that day forward, both John and his mother said that he had been “snatched from the fire.” They believed firmly that God had a special purpose for his life. Zechariah’s vision originally served to encourage an Israelite high priest named Joshua after Israel had returned from exile. Hostile neighbors and the hardships of rebuilding a city and a way of life the Babylonian army had completely wiped out taxed Joshua’s courage. In your life, what “fires” (outward or inward) has God snatched you out of? At age 51, Wesley fell seriously ill. Thinking he might be about to die (he would actually live another 37 years), he composed his own epitaph, which began, “Here lieth the Body of JOHN WESLEY, A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE BURNING.” What experiences have made you the most grateful for the gift of life, of each day?

Pray - God, I thank you for the gift of this day. Help me to live this day as a gift from your hand, to let your light shine through me and to thank you for the privilege of being alive. Amen.

Saturday, April 24

Read - Romans 8:18-28

Notice - HWe’ve learned that John Wesley’s early years were tough. His family was poor, and had a mix of strengths and weaknesses. Religious and political divisions sowed hatred in England, and with a huge gap between rich and poor, many people had given up faith. Yet many of those very factors helped shape the man he became--a man who for around 40 years rode an estimated 8,000 miles per year on horseback, preached an estimated 1,000 sermons per year, and dramatically changed England (and America, too) for the better. Today’s scripture does not say, as people sometimes think, that “all things” are good— because they’re not. It says God, who is always good, can take all things, even the painful and difficult ones, and bend them to serve a good purpose in our life, if we are willing to put them in God’s hands. Can you look back and see how God has brought good out of hard things you have faced? What are you facing right now that is painful, frustrating or scary? Spend time honestly telling God how hard those things are, and expressing trust that, in God’s own timing, he can bring good for you out of them.

Pray - Jesus, thank you for being with me in good times and bad. Thank you for using your power to bring good out of even the bad times I face. Teach me to trust you more and more as I journey through life. Amen.

Grace currently has a membership to Amplify, a media ministry of the United Methodist Publishing House. You can look at free options at <https://amplifymedia.com/>, even without the Grace “code” for our membership. If you would like to look at other content, please email bob.dean@iaumc.net for information on how to access all the materials with Grace’s code.



\

If you need help scheduling an appointment for your COVID-19 vaccination, call the church office, and we will have someone contact you to offer assistance.



Church & Society Action Alert

The Church and Society Committee shares opportunities for advocacy and action with Grace members. We are aware of a low lift action item regarding environmental and climate issues.

Iowa Interfaith Power & Light is committed to mobilize people of faith and conscience to take action on climate change. A Call to Action has been issued to write postcards to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack to ask for his support to live up to his equity promise during his confirmation and support BIPOC farmers, including small and medium size farmers and ranchers.

The postcard has been pre-written and just requires you to sign your name, identify Grace UMC, Des Moines as your faith community, and put a stamp on it. They are mailed to national Interfaith Power & Light who will be collecting cards so they can be delivered in bulk to Sec. Vilsack.

Printed postcards from Iowa IPL are currently available to be picked up in the church lobby. Postcards should be mailed no later than May 1. Please take enough to send one from each member of your household!

As Iowans, let’s lift up our voices for support for equity.

WORSHIP LEADERS: Rev. Nate Nims; Jane Emry Becker, liturgist.

RESOURCES USED IN THIS SERVICE:

Call to Worship and opening prayer from Revival, Faith as Wesley Lived It, Leader Guide.

† In hymns, prayers, and liturgies, use language that makes worship meaningful, enriching, and inclusive.



Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter at GraceDesMoines

In-person services are suspended for the time being, Please join us online for worship.
Watch the livestream of the 10:15 am service on the GraceDesMoines Facebook page
or on our YouTube channel..