

August 30, 2020 13th Sunday after Pentecost



St. John United Church of Christ

10207 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Heights, IL
Telephone 397-6323

Office Hours: Monday and Thursday
9 am – 2 pm

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Prayers and Liturgy by Rev. Kaji S. Douša

ORGANIST/PIANIST – Sharon Banjavcic

Exodus 3:1-15 and Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26,

Romans 12:9-21, Matthew 16:21-28

ANNOUNCEMENTS: THERE WILL NOT BE A MINI-WORSHIP SERVICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2020. Have a good Labor Day Holiday.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

We who dwell in the shelter of the Most High
Seek God here.

We who come to be inspired and changed
Seek God's Spirit here.

We who know how little we know
Seek God's Word here.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF INVOCATION:

God, you are made known to us in the rustling wind that blows, in the blazing fire that does not consume, in the face of the good, in the deep of the unknown.

We meet you here. We accept your greeting. We welcome your inspiration.

We await the change you have in store for us. Draw us in to you. Inhabit our spirits.

Focus our attention.

Bring us to you – you who are already with us.

Help us to be as you would have us be.

Through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, here and everywhere, now and always. Amen.

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 16:21-28

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and legal experts, and that he had to be killed and raised on the third day. ²² Then Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him: “God forbid, Lord! This won’t happen to you.” ²³ But he turned to Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan. You are a stone that could make me stumble, for you are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.”

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. ²⁵ All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me will find them. ²⁶ Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? What will people give in exchange for their lives? ²⁷ For the Human One^[a] is about to come with the majesty of his Father with his angels. And then he will repay each one for what that person has done. ²⁸ I assure you that some standing here won’t die before they see the Human One^[b] coming in his kingdom.”

Footnotes: Matthew 16:27 Or *Son of Man*
Matthew 16:28 Or *Son of Man*

SERMON: “Assumptions”

Last week, in our scripture texts, Jesus asked “who am I?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Immediately after that conversation, we have today’s text where Jesus tells all the

disciples that he must go to Jerusalem where he will suffer and die.

Can you imagine what Peter was thinking when he heard this? “Wait, wait! You just told me I would be the rock to build your church on. Now you are telling us that you are leaving us? I thought we were going to build your church together. Now you’re backing out of the deal. You’re leaving me?!!”

Of course, Jesus had not told Peter that they would work together, hand in hand, to build the church. I think Peter just assumed that.

At least that’s what I would have assumed if I were Peter. (I’ve taken a little poetic license to imagine these assumptions.)

As mere mortals, I think we make many assumptions. The disciples probably assumed Jesus would always be with them. I wonder if the disciples even thought about what they would be doing 10 years down the road; perhaps still wandering the dusty countryside so Jesus could proclaim the good news of the gospel, teaching and healing people.

Sure, maybe the disciples could go out on their own to do mission work, but they would always come back to Jesus where he would teach them more. Do you think the disciples took notes while they listened and watched Jesus so they would know what to do when they did those mission trips?

Personally, I don’t think they ever thought that they would be without Jesus. They just assumed Jesus was the expert on this evangelism

stuff and that they would never be called on to lead instead of follow.

Perhaps you have had an experience like that. I often wonder about the first time a newly graduated teacher walks into a classroom at her first job. No matter how well she was prepared, I'm sure she had a lump in her throat. The same can be said about new nurses, new electricians, and new pastors. They might have needed some "self-talk", saying "you can do this! You've got this!" But I'm making assumptions.

Do we ever make assumptions about Jesus? "Oh, Jesus can take care of that." For example, when we pray for someone going into the operating room, we assume that Jesus will guide the surgeon's hands. However, I believe there is a human part of this equation. The surgeon has spent many, many



years studying and practicing her craft. I believe Jesus was with the surgeon all those years helping her become proficient so she can take

care of our loved ones.

Do we ever assume that God will take care of all people who are suffering after disasters or other cataclysmic events? I'm sure you've heard people say, "why doesn't God do something to help?" We assume that God can stop this pandemic. We assume God can wipe out hunger in the world. We assume God is omnipotent and will do anything we humans ask God to do.

Just like the disciples, we sometimes forget the human part of the equation. We assume God can do everything and we'll just sit over here and watch.

Instead God brings to us not only proficient surgeons, but scientists to make a vaccine against Covid 19. God brings us health care providers to make us well. God brings us neighbors who send cards of sympathy or get-well cards and maybe a casserole. God sends us church people to pray for us. God sends people to donate to and volunteer at food pantries.



God says we must do our part. Jesus calls us to pick up a cross and carry it. Pick up something difficult or hard to do to help others. Go do God's work even if you have to give up your time or maybe get your hands dirty.

Jesus' hands were dirty when he carried his cross. This week I invite you to look for all the people God is sending you to help you. Look for people doing God's will. Then instead of assuming someone else will build the church, someone else will heal people, someone else will stop violence in the streets, Jesus will find the right people to do those things. See if there is somewhere you can be God's hand and feet. I don't assume, I KNOW God has a plan for you. Amen.



PASTORAL PRAYER:

Gracious God, we know our love isn't always genuine. We see evil and wring our hands instead of resisting it. We forget to consider more ways to serve you. We turn our back on strangers who could benefit from our hospitality. We do not pray enough for our enemies. We associate with our own kind, fearing the "other".

For all this, and for all that burdens our heart today, O God, we seek your forgiveness. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.

We pray for all those affected by this pandemic, those who are sick, those who have lost loved ones, and those who have lost their jobs. We are thankful for all the medical providers working very hard to care for us.

We pray for the teachers and students returning to school. We pray for the parents who are staying home to help teach their children. Give them patience.

We ask the Great Physician to comfort those on our prayer list as we pray together the prayer he taught us . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. The 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.

THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR OFFERING:

BENEDICTION: Written by Larry Hine and shared with Brennan Manning.

"May all your expectations be frustrated.

May all your plans be thwarted.

May all your desires be withered into nothingness, THAT you may experience the powerlessness and poverty of a child AND sing and dance in the compassion of God, who is Creator, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen."

ST. JOHN PRAYER LIST: Rich Schmitt, Tom Petroff, Hunter Brink, Nelson Libell, Dave Seneczyn, Eric White, Lori Riess, Charles Chamberlin, Donna Isselhard, Mitch Nallie, Candy Pearce, Greg Talley, Carol Meyer, Leah Williams, Pat Holtgrave, Jane Riess, Shari Hamilton, Charlotte Watson, Becky Ballard.

(If there are names on this list that you believe can be removed, call the church secretary.)

Prayer list for Churches & Pastors in ISC

- Farina Friedens UCC, Dr. Jerry (Cathy) Gesell, Sr.
- Floraville St. Paul UCC, Pastor Matt (Laura) Friz

Retired Pastor

- Rev. Nancy Spier-Lee and Kevin Lee