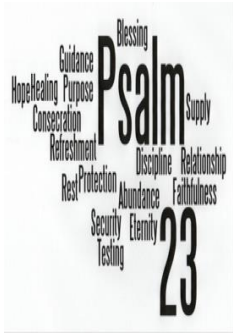

As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.

May we together experience the presence of God.

** - You are invited to stand at these times... if you are able*

We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord



Prelude - Welcome - Announcements

Opening Meditation

The real question for us today is not, "Will God speak to me, to us today?" Instead, the true question is - will we listen for that voice that is speaking? Jesus doesn't say, "Listen and maybe I'll have something to say." He says, "Listen to my voice."

"I am speaking" is the implied message, so pay attention. Come let us worship.

*** Call to Worship (Psalm 23)**

23:1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

23:3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

23:4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff-- they comfort me.

23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

***Prayer**

Oh God, We are so preoccupied with counting sheep that we forget how much we need a shepherd. We are so occupied with numbers and statistics that we forget to leave the counting to you. You already know the sum of the hairs on the very heads that you have anointed. You know our days, our challenges, our successes and our needs. Today, we confess that our greatest need is for a shepherd. And the lesson we have yet to learn is how to be your sheep. Amen.

***Hymn FWS #2128 "Come and Find the Quiet Center"**

Author: Shirley Erena Murray

Publication Date: 2003

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Tune Information

Composer (attr.): B. F. White

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**1 Come and find the quiet center
in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter,
find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter,
clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter,
be at peace, and simply be.**

**2 Silence is a friend who claims us,
cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us,
knows our being, touches base,
making space within our thinking,
lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking,
finding scope for faith begun.**

**3 In the Spirit let us travel,
open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel,
celebrate the space we gain:
There's a place for deepest dreaming,
there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming
there is always room to spare.**

We Hear God's Word

New Testament Lesson.....1 John 3:16-24

16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters. 17 How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

18 Little children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. 19 And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him 20 whenever our hearts condemn us, for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God, 22 and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

Word of God for the People of God! Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

***Faith Hymn UMH #128 "He Leadeth Me; O Blessed Thought"**

Author: Joseph H. Gilmore (1862)

Publication Date: 1989

Tune Information

Name: HE LEADETH ME

Composer: William B. Bradbury (1864)

**1. He leadeth me: O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.**

Refrain:

**He leadeth me, he leadeth me,
by his own hand he leadeth me;
his faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me.**

**2. Sometimes mid scenes of deepest gloom,
sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
by waters still, o'er troubled sea,
still 'tis his hand that leadeth me. [Refrain]**

**3. Lord, I would place my hand in thine,
nor ever murmur nor repine;
content, whatever lot I see,
since 'tis my God that leadeth me. [Refrain]**

**4. And when my task on earth is done,
when by thy grace the victory's won,
e'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
since God through Jordan leadeth me. [Refrain]**

****Message****

Joys/Concerns

Prayers of the People – Lord's Prayer

God of all things seen and unseen, if you had insulated yourself from the pain of the world, then your name could not be love and our condition would be without hope. Thank you for being so personally involved, for revealing your complete commitment in Jesus of Nazareth. Through him we pray with hope, in him we pray with love. Let your healing love be known this day by all who suffer ailment of body, or distress of mind, or agony of spirit

Let your intimate love be known today by all who feel forgotten or lost, and all who are walking in the dark valley of despair.

Let your fierce love this day redress the wrongs of all who suffer exploitation, injustice, abuse, neglect, violence or unwarranted imprisonment.

Let your nurturing love today encourage those who are gathering resolve to make tough decisions, take on new responsibilities, or break free from some bondage.

Today we come before you with the prayer on our lips that your Son taught us.....

Offertory – Doxology (UM Hymnal 95) - Prayer

Most Gracious God, you proclaimed your powerful love by raising Jesus from death to eternal life. We are grateful that you forgive our sins and bring peace to all who trust in you. Help us to offer your forgiveness and reconciliation in relationships with people in our lives. May we respond to your tremendous love with glad and generous hearts. We dedicate these gifts and offerings in the name of Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. Amen.

****Departing Hymn UMH #432***

“Jesu, Jesu” (verse 1-3)

Author: Tom Colvin (1969)

Publication Date: 1989

Copyright: © 1969, 1989 Hope Publishing Co.

Tune Information

Adapter: Tom Colvin (1969)

Harmonizer: Charles H. Webb (1988)

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[Refrain:]

Jesu, Jesu,

**fill us with your love, show us how to serve
the neighbors we have from you.**

**1 Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them.
(Refrain)**

**2 Neighbors are rich and poor,
neighbors are black and white,
neighbors are near and far away.
(Refrain)**

**3 These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love;
all these are neighbors to us and you.
(Refrain)**

***Blessing**

Go forth to declare salvation in Jesus' name. Alleluia!

Postlude