

# **First Presbyterian Church of Plymouth, Michigan**

**Sunday, May 30, 2021**

**“Lest We Forget”**

**Rev. Emily Riley Campbell, Senior Pastor**

## **Rev. Emily Riley Campbell – Welcome, Announcements and Opening Prayer**

Welcome to worship at First Presbyterian Church of Plymouth on this Memorial Day weekend! It is a joy to welcome you from wherever you are watching today.

On this special Sunday we remember, not only those who gave their lives in the service of our country, but as a church we pause to remember those members of our congregation who, within the past year, have entered God's heavenly Kingdom. Recognizing that this has been an unusual and a difficult year for so many families, we will also recognize today loved ones and friends who may not have been members of this church but who are members of God's larger family and universal church. As a church which has been worshipping apart, yet together in spirit, we cling to that hope and promise that there is nothing in life or in death, nothing in the present or the future, nothing in all creation, that can separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord. We lean into this hope filled promise, and we lean into God's holy presence this morning as we come before God with our every emotion, our sadness and grief, our joy and hope, our worries and concerns.

As a church, we are extremely grateful for all the signs that we can see around us of a recovery from Covid. We are delighted to share with you that we have plans as a church to return to live worship services within our church building on Sunday, July 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. We will continue to offer our online services indefinitely, and our parking lot services will carry on throughout the summer, through Labor Day weekend.

There is a complete worship schedule available in our online bulletin, but a schedule has also been mailed out this week to all of our church members with a pamphlet entitled “Refresh, Renew, Return.” This pamphlet outlines all that we hope to accomplish prior to our return to our church building. There is specific information about all of these improvements and refreshments on page 6 in our church bulletin online today.

I am truly blessed to be leading worship along with the newly ordained Ashley Ashley! Reverend Ashley will be presiding over the communion portion of our service today and now would be an excellent time for you to pause this video and to go and gather the needed communion elements you have at home.

Friends, in addition to Ashley's help, I'm grateful for Mark Hovermale and Darlene Maginley, who are also helping to lead worship today. Near the end of this service you will see a vocal quartet comprised of Carole Moon, Lynda Park, Tom Weaver and Lawrence Zane; I am grateful for their contribution. Of course, I am thankful to Susan Underhill for her contribution in using her amazing video skills to bring this service together.

Now many of you know that today is my last service with you before I head off on a time of extended leave and vacation for two months. I will, of course, be praying for you while I am away and I look forward to returning to worship in our church building together with you.

Let us now prepare our hearts for worship as we approach God in prayer. Would you all please pray with me.

Gracious and loving God, we come before you this morning with minds that are eager to know you, with hearts eager to love you, with voices that are eager to sing your praise. We do praise you, our heavenly father, for sending your son into this world to live our life, to die our death, and to rise beyond death. Your son's resurrection is the hope that sustains us. Help us to lean into this hope and comfort and peace today. Forgive us, Lord, for the times when we forget you. Forgive us for when the busyness of our lives crowds you out of our priorities. Help us in this time of worship to refocus our hearts and minds on you. Send your Holy Spirit to lead us closer to you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Congregation, accompanied by Joyful Ringers Bell Choir, sing "*For All The Saints*"  
Recorded November 10, 2019**

### **Darlene Maginley, Director of Children's Ministry — Children's Message**

Good morning, kids. So the last year has been a little bit difficult for everyone. My daughter, who a lot of you know from Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, is a senior in high school this year. She has had a pretty tough year, being sad and a little bit grumpy about all of the things that she is missing during her senior year. She didn't get to have Homecoming. She doesn't get to have lunch with her friends. She only sees half of her friends every other day. Well, prom is coming up and she was pretty disappointed because prom is only going to be for a couple of hours. It's outside and they don't even get to dance at prom.

A few days ago something happened that made our whole family kind of stop and think a little bit. A very good friend of Claire lost her dad very suddenly when he got sick for no reason and he passed away. Instead of going to prom, her good friend is going to be at the funeral home for a service for her dad.

We started to think that all of that time we had been kind of grumpy about all of the things we were missing in the last year, we forgot to stop and think about all of the amazing things that God gave us in the last year. He gave us a family that loves each other and a warm house and food to eat. He gave us safety; all of us were healthy and strong the entire year. But we forgot to thank him for those things.

Now I know it's hard to think about someone dying. I don't like to think about it. It's scary for grownups, too. But you know, nowhere in the Bible does it ever tell us that we are supposed to be afraid, or we are supposed to worry, or we are supposed to get in a panic, and all stressed out. The Bible doesn't say that anywhere! You know, what the Bible does tell us. It tells us over and over, "Fear not." It tells us, "Don't worry. I'm going to take care of you."

Today's Bible verse says, "Sing to the Lord, Oh my soul; sing praises to the Lord." That's what the Bible tells us to do. Instead of thinking about all of the things that we don't have or that we want or that new Xbox that a friend has that we don't, let's stop and think about all of the many ways that God has blessed us. Every day, let's keep that at the forefront of what we're thinking about! Let's pray together.

Dear Father, we pray for all of the families who are going through struggles and who are grieving right now. We thank you for the blessings that you have given us. On the days that we are struggling and we have things that we're going through, help us to remember, even on those difficult days, that you have blessed us because you gave us your son to save us from our sins and to give us life with you. All of these things we ask in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

### **Rev. Mark Hovermale – First Scripture Reading: Psalm 103**

Our first scripture reading today is Psalm 103 from the Old Testament.

*(Psalm of David)*

- 1 Praise the LORD, my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- 2 Praise the LORD, my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits—
- 3 who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,
- 4 who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- 5 who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
  
- 6 The LORD works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.
  
- 7 He made known his ways to Moses,  
his deeds to the people of Israel:
- 8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.
- 9 He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.
- 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;
- 12 as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
  
- 13 As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
- 14 for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.
- 15 The life of mortals is like grass,

they flourish like a flower of the field;  
<sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone,  
and its place remembers it no more.  
<sup>17</sup> But from everlasting to everlasting  
the LORD's love is with those who fear him,  
and his righteousness with their children's children—  
<sup>18</sup> with those who keep his covenant  
and remember to obey his precepts.

<sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne in heaven,  
and his kingdom rules over all.

<sup>20</sup> Praise the LORD, you his angels,  
you mighty ones who do his bidding,  
who obey his word.

<sup>21</sup> Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts,  
you his servants who do his will.

<sup>22</sup> Praise the LORD, all his works  
everywhere in his dominion.

Praise the LORD, my soul.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

### **Rev. Campbell — Second Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 4:9**

Our second scripture lesson today comes from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. It's a reading of Deuteronomy, chapter 4, and verse 9.

<sup>9</sup> Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

### **Rev. Campbell — Sermon: "Lest We Forget"**

Let us now turn our hearts and minds towards God in prayer. Would you all please pray with me. Praise the Lord, Oh my soul, and all that is within me; praise his holy name. Help us, dear God, to praise you today, with all that we are and with all that you have created us to be. Help us today to remember your generous gifts of love and grace, compassion and redemption. This we ask in your precious name. Amen.

Friends, tomorrow is Memorial Day and on that day we all pause from our normal activities to remember and honor the men and women who died while serving in the US military. The origins of Memorial Day can be traced all the way back to the Civil War. At that time the day was called Decoration Day. That day occurred on May 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. Americans would visit cemeteries and memorials, hold family gatherings and parades so that they would never forget the sacrifices made by others for our freedom.

As a child, growing up in a small town in the United States, I loved Memorial Day parades. And as a young minister whose first call was overseas, I was also deeply moved by the worldwide call to remember those who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of others. During my ten years living abroad in Scotland, every year that I was serving within the church I was asked to participate in the Memorial Day service.

In Britain that Memorial Day tribute is called Remembrance Day. During Remembrance Day services often I was asked to read part of a poem by Laurence Binyon. It goes like this,

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them.*

Peppered throughout that Remembrance Day service, between the prayers and scripture readings, there was a refrain that was said by all who were gathered at that service. The refrain said this, "Lest we forget."

In other words, we gather in worship, with our prayers and scriptures and poems, with wreaths and decorations, all, so we never forget the gift of freedom we have received and the cost that that freedom has placed on others. We remember, but the call to remember is not only a call that is born out of war.

There is a deeper spiritual call for us to remember. That call is first spoken by God 253 times within the canon of scripture. This is the number of times the word "remember" appears in our Biblical texts. In addition to those obvious verses, there are many others like the one I already read to you this morning from Deuteronomy, chapter 4, at verse 9, which says only,

"Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them."

This is a call for us to remember. It's a call similar to the one found in Psalm 103 which Mark read to you already. Beginning at verse 2 of that Psalm, it says,

<sup>2</sup> Praise the LORD, my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits—  
<sup>3</sup> who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,  
<sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,  
<sup>5</sup> who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

As God's people today we are called to remember the lifesaving acts of God. And not just on one day, one special day of the year. We are called to remember the lifesaving acts not even once a week, although the Sabbath was, in fact, given to us as a day to help us remember. As Christians, our call is to remember the lifesaving and life-giving acts of God each and every single day for the rest of our lives!

Now the only problem with this particular spiritual call is that most of us seem to be suffering from some sort of spiritual dementia. We forget all too quickly all that God has done in our lives in the past. And we forget all too quickly what God has done in the life of our world, both recently and throughout history.

The Old Testament tells us that this is an inherited disease. I know that because the history of God's people, especially throughout the Old Testament is a history of forgetfulness. In scripture, we are told that when God's people were delivered safely from Egypt out of slavery, when God had delivered them safely through the Red Sea, they promptly forgot God's saving acts. Later in scripture we are told that when God's people were in the wilderness and they were grumbling and complaining that God had forgotten them and they were hungry, God fed them for years by manna in the morning and by quail at night. God's people even then forgot God's faithful care and love. They doubted that God, indeed, was interested in their lives.

Well, that scripture story continues, and we're told that when God's people were lost, God provided them, even then, with clear direction, a sort of spiritual GPS in the form of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. These gifts were literally put in front of God's people so they could travel night or day and know exactly where they were going and know exactly where God was leading them. Even then they forgot that God had promised that he would deliver them home safely.

Today, in our own struggles, too often we forget God, as well. We forget all that God has done in Jesus Christ to secure our future. Even though we celebrate Christmas and Easter each year with grand celebrations, we still in our day-to-day lives manage to forget God's promised provision!

Friends, I am telling you here and now, that as our world pivots so quickly in some ways out of this Covid pandemic, we are also in danger of forgetting God's saving acts and grace. It would be right for us to pause to remember to praise God, for we prayed for a vaccine and multiple vaccines came in record time. We prayed for a way to survive isolation, to stay connected as a church, when our church building had to close, and God gifted us with online services, with Zoom technology, with a network of church friends and God gifted us with the preaching porch in our own parking lot! God gifted us with eyes and vision to see our building's closure as an opportunity to equip our church for the future.

We prayed during the pandemic for more ministers to come to serve within our congregation and God faithfully provided us with both Mark and Ashley. We prayed for live music to return to our church and this morning in our live parking lot service our Chancel Choir is there singing live!

Every single day we pray for life to return a little bit more to normal, and that new normal is coming by God's grace each and every single day. We have much for which to praise God and to offer God thanks for. Today, lest not we forget the praise that God deserves, for not only bringing us through this pandemic but for offering us a life and a death filled with hope.

Psalm 103, the psalm we're looking at today, is at its core a psalm of praise. Nowhere in this particular psalm does the psalmist ask for anything. The only thing this psalm is about is gratitude and praise for God's saving acts. But Psalm 103 is not the only call to remember God's saving acts that we will receive this morning. God continues to repeat this message, this call to us in so many different ways.

Later in our service we will be celebrating communion together. In these gifts of bread and cup we are reminded again to remember the saving acts of God. Later in our service, again on this Memorial Day weekend, we will follow that tradition and we will read out the

names of those members of our church who have died in the past year. Following the reading of their name there will be a bell to help us remember their lives, their faith, their witness, so that our lives are filled not only with gratitude for their living, but with hope and with confidence that we will see them again.

Friends there's one last thing that I want you to remember about God's call to remember. This comes directly out of the teaching of Psalm 103. If we were to look at that psalm in its original Hebrew language we would see that in all the times the word "remember" is used, it's a particular Hebrew word called "zakhar" which is used. Our God who remembers our need and that particular verb "remember" is not only used of God, it's used about God's people who remember God and God's covenant and their response to God. But one time in that Psalm the word "remember" is translated by a different Hebrew word and this particular word for "remember" highlights how the world forgets but yet God and God's faithful people remember.

Let's listen to that particular passage in English. It says beginning at verse 15,

15 The life of mortals is like grass,  
they flourish like a flower of the field;  
16 the wind blows over it and it is gone,  
and its place remembers it no more.

The world may remember them no more. The place may not remember them anymore, but do not ever for one moment think that God forgets! God is working by an altogether different form of remembering. God never forgets his people. In life and in death, God does not forget!

The scriptures make it clear that there is nothing in this world, nothing that can separate us from God's love. As God's people today we are also called to remember in an altogether different way than what the world may do. We are called to follow the example of God whose memory does not fail. And so we have a job to do, as God's people today, to remember the legacy and the witness of those who go before us into God's heavenly kingdom. We are called to remember their faith and to proclaim their faith. We are called to proclaim the faith of all who have gone before us throughout the canon of scripture and throughout the history of our church. We are called not only to remember it and to praise God for it, but to teach that history to our children and to our children's children.

Friends, you and I both know in the business of life there are moments when we struggle with forgetting God. We forget what God has done in our lives and in the world. In those moments when we forget, I want you to remember that God has not forgotten us! God's hold on us is much greater than our hold on God. Today we praise God for never leaving us and never forsaking us. On this Memorial Day, with gratitude and praise, we thank God for all that he has sacrificed to secure our future, lest we forget we are God's beloved people, today and always. Amen.

### **Rev. Campbell – A Call To Remembrance**

In John's gospel, we find these words, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life."

Friends, it is with faith in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ that we pause to thank God for the lives and witness of members from this church who have gone ahead of us into God's heavenly Kingdom. The names I will read out to you this morning are names of

our church members who have entered God's glory since Memorial Day a year ago. The names are listed in the order of their passing and for each name that is read you will hear a bell calling us to remember their lives and thank God for their witness.

Today we remember and thank God for

Dave Richards  
Sally Dauderman  
Marilyn Moore  
Betty Morrow  
Millie Ferrari  
Carol Packard  
Michael Mincher  
Marian West  
Don Morgan

Friends, in addition to these members, in the past year, as a congregation, many of us have lost family members who were not members of this church but were members of our hearts and our families. So we pause now to recognize *all* those whom we have loved and lost.

Would you all please join me in prayer. Let us pray.

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the pleasure and privilege of knowing and loving such an amazing cloud of witnesses. We praise you, dear God, for the gifts of their lives and for their example of faith and service. We pray your blessing upon each and every single one of their family members today. We remember and thank you also, dear God, for the lives of others close to us who may not have been members of this church family but who most certainly are part of your eternal family. Today, for all the saints whom we have known, who have helped to shape our lives in faith, we thank you and praise you, dear God. Keep them forever in your tender care. Keep us in your tender care. Lord, we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friends, we would be remiss this year as we move out of this global pandemic if we did not pause to remember those many people who we may not have known by name but who God most certainly knew by name. We pause and remember their lives this year, as we reflect on the fact that in the past year over 20,000 people have died in the state of Michigan from Covid. In the past year in the United States, over 590,000 people have died from this pandemic, and throughout our world since it has begun, nearly three and a half million people in the world have died. With this loss let us once again turn to God in prayer. Would you all please pray with me.

Gracious and loving God, it is hard for us to take in the staggering numbers of loss that we have just shared. We pray, dear God, today that your Holy Spirit would be poured out upon each and every family throughout this world who mourns the loss of loved ones. Grant them, we pray, resurrection hope. Grant them comfort and peace and help us as your children and witnesses today to be your arms of loving care to all who are in need,

Lord, help us as one family as your family to be part of the healing of this world. This, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Rev. Ashley Ashley -- Call to Sacrament of Communion, and the Prayers of the People with the Lord's Prayer**

As we gather around this table today, let us remember the words of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the one who says, "Come, all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and in me you will find rest for your souls."

As we come before our Lord in prayer let us remember that this is God's table and at God's table all are welcome. Friends, let us pray.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and on these, your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. By your Spirit unite us with the living Christ and with all who are baptized in his name.

May this table serve as a reminder of your presence and the presence of all those who have gone before us in faith. We lift up the witness and service of those who have entered the church triumphant this past year. We remember our sisters and brothers, our friends, neighbors, and family members with joy. We honor the memory of our service members and first responders who made the ultimate sacrifice. We lift all of these dear ones to you, knowing that they may now fully rest in your arms.

Heavenly Father, for those of us still here we ask that you would be our peace as we grieve their loss, be our comfort as we recall their memory, and be our strength as we strive to serve you faithfully until the promised day of resurrection when, with the redeemed of all the ages, we will feast with you at your table in glory. As we await that time, bind us together in prayer as we recite the words you taught us to pray 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.

**Rev. Ashley — Words of Institution and Breaking of the Bread and Closing Prayer**

Friends, on the night that our Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread and after giving thanks for it to his Father in heaven, He broke it saying, "Take, eat, this is my body given for you. Do so in remembrance of me." And in the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Every time you drink of it, do so in remembrance of me."

So now every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do so we can proclaim the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ until he comes again in glory. Friends, these are the gifts of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Come let us gather together in whatever space we're in and partake of them together.

Gracious God, you have called us all together at this table from our different homes and spaces of worship. Joined by all your people and your mercy we have been nourished by the living bread, Jesus Christ, and we have been refreshed by the power of your Holy Spirit. May we who have shared this holy meal go out as glad disciples of our Lord, following in His way, proclaiming truth and living His love for the world. Amen.

**Quartet sings *"The Lord Bless You and Keep You"*  
Carole Moon, Lynda Park, Tom Weaver, Lawrence Zane**

**Rev. Campbell – Benediction and Blessing**

And now may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up his countenance and give you peace, today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen.