

BLESSING

OF UNIONS

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, 2020

BLESSING - 10:50 AM, SANCTUARY

RECEPTION - 12:30 PM, FELLOWSHIP HALL

*"Love God; love neighbor. On these two
commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."
Jesus Christ*

Bering Memorial Church - 1440 Harold Street - Houston, TX 77006

GATHERING

Please take a moment to silence all electronic devices, so that others may worship undisturbed.

CARES & CONCERNS

Rev. Diane McGehee

GREETING/ANNOUNCEMENTS/WELCOME

Rev. Diane McGehee

(Please take a moment to fill out the red pew pad and pass it to your neighbor.)

We say these things and believe these things because we are disciples of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God! Amen.

OPENING VOLUNTARY *O Promise Me*—Reginald de Koven

Bob Manchester, organist

CHORAL INTROIT *Fill the House of God*—Robert Leaf

Chancel Choir

*THE PROCESSIONAL HYMN *All Creatures of Our God and King*

Hymn No. 62

(People standing and singing)

*THE GREETING

Rev. Cassandra Nunez

(People standing and reading responsively)

On this day, we gather to celebrate the rainbow face of God in all creation.

We gather to worship the God who, in love, created us in all our diversity and uniqueness and called us each, “Very good!”

We gather in celebration of God's diverse beauty all around us, love incarnate in our midst.

We gather in love, for God is love and calls us to love relentlessly, recklessly, and with wild abandon, even as God does.

We gather as God's beloved children of every sexual orientation, gender identity and gender-free expression, every form of love, seeking God's full abundance for all.

We gather committed to living out God's love so that all whom God created are seen in love, heard in love, allowed to live in love and celebrated for their sacred worth. We gather to worship God and celebrate the presence of God in each and every one of us and in the love we share! Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Rev. Diane McGehee

(People seated and reading responsively)

Let us pray:

God of us all, I stand before you this morning as an ordained Elder of the United Methodist Church, authorized by that Church to teach, preach and proclaim the Gospel of Your love and welcome for ALL people in and through Jesus Christ who gave His life that we might ALL have life and that more abundantly. This morning I stand in that authority and on behalf of the entire United Methodist Church confess that we have sinned against You and against these Your beloved children. We have caused harm where You sent us to heal. We have excluded when You sent us to include. I confess that rather than being defined by Your love, we have been defined by fear, arrogance, narrow-mindedness, bigotry, sexism, entitlement, homophobia, gender oppression, privilege, binary thinking, and all the other ways that we have justified oppressing whole categories of people. We have put our gender norms and preferred sexual orientation before our love for You and for our neighbors. In Your name, we have harmed those whom You made in Your image, by Your creative choice, as LGBTQAI+. Forgive us, O God. Hold us accountable until we repent and turn again toward You so that ALL of Your children find their place of welcome at the table of Your grace as beloved, celebrated children of inestimable worth. **Amen.**

And to you my siblings in Christ, ALL of you, I confess my sin and the sin of the United Methodist Church and ask your forgiveness. **Amen.**

MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR PERSONAL PRAYER AND REFLECTION

ANTHEM *I Am His Child*—Moses Hogan

Chancel Choir

CHILDREN'S TIME

Rev. Diane McGehee

(All of the children are invited to come to the front of the sanctuary at this time. After the Children's Time, our Children's Ministry leaders will lead the children (ages 4 and older) to Children's Church. They will return to the sanctuary for the Blessing of the Unions and celebration of Holy Communion.)

***HYMN OF PRAISE** *O Perfect Love*
(People standing)

Hymnal No. 645

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE AND WITNESS

BIBLICAL LOVE: Naomi and Ruth - Ruth

Michael Glazner

REFLECTION

Rev. Diane McGehee

BIBLICAL LOVE David and Jonathan - I Samuel

Michael Nicholson

REFLECTION

Rev. Diane McGehee

BIBLICAL LOVE Lazarus - John 11

David L. Johnson

REFLECTION

Rev. Diane McGehee

***THE SHARING OF THE PEACE OF CHRIST WITH ONE ANOTHER**
(People standing)

***THE OFFERTORY HYMN** *What Gift Can We Bring?* (1st stanza)
(People standing and singing)

Hymn No. 87

**What gift can we bring, what present, what token?
What words can convey it, the joy of this day?
When grateful we come, remembering, rejoicing
what song can we offer in honor and praise?**

***INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

Rev. Stephanie Scovell

God calls us to share what we have and God uses those simple gifts to bring abundant blessing to the world. Let us give as we are able.

THE OFFERTORY *Always*—Irving Berlin

Bob Manchester, organist

***THE PRESENTATION AND DOXOLOGY**
(People standing and singing)

Tune: *Lasst uns Erfreuen*, Hymn No. 94

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

ENACTMENT OF THE WORD

BLESSING OF UNIONS

Rev. Diane McGehee

(At this time, all same gender couples, transgender couples, non-gender binary couples and families are invited to come forward for a blessing. After all couples desiring a blessing have come forward, all clergy and laity are invited to come forward to lay hands on those receiving the blessing so that the entire body of witnesses participates in the blessing.)

Let us Pray.

Gracious God, we thank You for each person standing before us today, that they are made uniquely in Your image in all their identity. We thank You for the love that You have given each couple and family for one another and the ways that the anointing of Your Spirit bears fruit in their lives and in their love for one another. We ask Your continued blessing on each couple and family: that Your love would continue to be present between them and in their relationships and actions in the world. May their love for one another always reflect Your love. May their love for one another be patient and kind, without envy, boastfulness or arrogance. May it never dishonor the other through self-seeking, may they not be easily angered – but instead filled with forgiveness, keeping no record of wrongs. May they always rejoice in the truth, always protect, always trust, always hope, always persevere. May they bear the fruit of the Spirit in their relationships with each other and the world: fruits of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, for as Your Word clearly states, against such, there is no law.

May they know themselves loved and celebrated by You and go out and serve the world, in obedience to Your command to love God and love neighbor, proclaiming the good news of Your welcome for all people.

And gracious God, thank You for the loving homes that these beautiful children share- with parents deeply committed to each other, to them and to You. Bless them and keep them from all harm. May they always be confident in Your love for them and for their parents. For You invited the little children to come to You, for of such is the kingdom of heaven, Amen.

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

We practice "open" communion, meaning all here today are invited to take Holy Communion. - There are 3 serving stations - 2 at the front altar rail and 1 at the back.- You will be given a piece of bread. You may dip the bread in the Common Cup, which is fermented, or take the individuals cups, which are grape juice. Gluten-free wafers can be found next to the grape juice. Offerings left at the communion rail today will be for Bering's Future. On the giving envelope check Special Offering.

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Rev. Diane McGehee

(People standing and reading responsively)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to You, Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth.

We gather this day at Your table as Your children in all our diversity, reflecting Your creative choice for each of us. Together we mirror the rainbow face of God.

On this day and at this table, You call us to be a people of justice, hospitality, love and healing.

On this day and at this table, we give thanks for Your Child, Jesus Christ, who, along with others who have gone before us, taught us the meaning of courage, who embodied integrity, who ruptured the death-dealing silence of judgment and condemnation, who call us to be bold, brave and bodaciously honest. Their virtue continues to be a blessing to us all.

On this day and at this table, You call us to stand for the liberation of Your people who are LGBTQIA+. We stand with them and thank You for Your presence and witness in the most outrageous queens, uppity men and women, those who refuse to be defined by our gender norms, pesky peacemakers, and annoying "gadflies." These saints remind us that laughter and celebration are brazen acts of resistance and expressions of a strength and a passion that neither the world nor the United Methodist Church can take away. Their audacity is a

blessing to us all.

On this day and at this table, we celebrate all those who, alongside our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, refused and continue to refuse to be silenced and made timid by fear. Their songs of love, their drag performances, their prayers of hope, their sermons of outrage, their protests, letters, speeches, mailings, poems, tears, righteous defiance and shouts of indignation, are gifts of passion and a blessing to us all.

And so, with Your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

***SANCTUS AND BENEDICTUS** Sally Ahner
(People standing and singing)

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might, heav - en and earth are
full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Blest is the one who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION
(People seated)

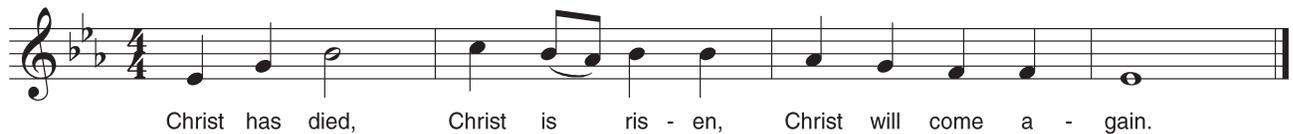
Holy are You, and blessed is Your Chosen One, Jesus Christ. While Jesus lived among us, He stood up for women, children and eunuchs; touched those labeled "untouchable;" celebrated those labeled "incompatible" healed the sick and welcomed those who had given up hope of being included. Through Jesus, we see a path not only to our own freedom, but a path to the liberation of the whole world. He taught us that the world will be saved through showing kindness to our neighbor, standing up against injustice, returning hate with love, and transforming one heart at a time. It will be in the simple but holy task of dining together, sharing food and drink, truly seeing one another as beloved by You, seeing Your rainbow face in all of creation.

We know this because by the baptism of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection, You gave birth to Your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which Jesus gave himself up for us He took bread, gave thanks to You, broke the bread, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." When the supper was over Jesus took the cup, gave thanks to You, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these Your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

THE MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION Sally Ahner



Pour out Your Holy Spirit on us, gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By Your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at the heavenly banquet. Through Your Child Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in Your holy Church, all honor and glory is Yours, almighty God, now and forever.

THE CHORAL AMEN James A. Kriewald (UM Hymn, p. 20)



The Celebrant concludes: "... And now, with the confidence of children of God, we are bold to pray."

THE PRAYER OF JESUS

Rev. Diane McGehee

(People seated and reading in unison)

Our Creator in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom+ come, Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom+, the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE TAKING OF THE CUP

SOLO *At This Table*—Idina Menzel and Jonas Myrin

Page Martinez, soloist

THE GIVING OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP

(Come to the altar, make your communion, stay as long as you wish, then return to your pew.)

Please join in singing these hymns of praise:

Hymn No. 500 *Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart*

Hymn No. 501 *O Thou Who Camest from Above*

THE PRAYER AFTER RECEIVING

Rev. Diane McGehee

(People seated and reading in unison)

Eternal God, we give You thanks for this holy mystery in which You have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of Your spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

***THE RECESSIONAL HYMN** *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*

Hymnal No. 89

(People standing and singing)

***THE DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING**

Rev. Diane McGehee

***CHORAL BENEDICTION** *Alleluia*—Larry Gatlin/William Simon

Chancel Choir

***CLOSING VOLUNTARY** *Wedding March from "A Midsummer Night's Dream"*—Felix Mendelssohn

Bob Manchester, organist

+“Kindom” denotes a world in which we recognize that we are related, that we are “kin” in God, and work to build relationships of love, peace, and justice with all of creation.
Jan Richardson, [Sacred Journeys](#)

"At This Table"

Words and Music by Idina Menzel and Jonas Myrin

At this table, everyone is welcome
At this table, everyone is seen
At this table, everybody matters
No one falls between

At this table, you can say whatever
At this table, you can speak your mind
At this table, everything's forgiven
There's enough for everyone

So come as you are
Remember that the door is always open
Yes, come as you are
The perfect gift that you can bring is your heart
So, come, come as you are

At this table, there will be no judgement
At this table, mercy has a seat
At this table, we're all sons and daughters
There's no place I'd rather be

So come as you are
Remember that the door is always open
Come as you are
The perfect gift that you can bring is your heart
Come, come as you are
Come as you are, oh

At this table, everyone is welcome
At this table, everybody cares
At this table, everybody matters
So, come, pull up a chair