

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. **We have come seeking that abundant life for ourselves. Bless us on our search with your grace and wisdom.**

#### PRAYER OF INVITATION

**Be found in our lives, Holy Spirit of God, we pray. Take us deeply into our time with you in this hour, what we may discover the treasures beyond price in our midst. Carry us beyond our spectacular assumptions into the quiet of wisdom and recognition of your hidden gifts. Come to us now, O God. Amen.**

#### THE WORD

Romans 8:28, 31-35, 37-39 (Common English Version)

We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.

**So what are we going to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He didn't spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. Won't he also freely give us all things with him?**

Who will bring a charge against God's elect people? It is God who acquits them. Who is going to convict them? It is Christ Jesus who died, even more, who was raised, and who also is at God's right side. It is Christ Jesus who also pleads our case for us.

**Who will separate us from Christ's love? Will we be separated by trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? But in all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us.**

I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is created.

#### Living the Word

Think Greater: Live Enthusiastically...

I have been trying to wrap my mind around this topic all week. On Sunday afternoon, after leading Adult Sunday School, Preaching for worship and then after pulling off my robe and grabbing a bite to eat, I taught the first Confirmation class of the year.

At 1pm, I took the batteries out of the microphones, collected my bulletin, sermon and announcement sheets, jotted all of the things people had shared with me during the morning, relocked the door and checked my directions for the gathering at Semler's. It was almost time to go.

I sat down in my comfortable office chair and turned to look at my books on the shelves. This comforts me. My eye traveled to the plaque that reminded me to 'be still and know God,' so I pulled my thoughts together through some prayers. I am thoroughly enjoying the gatherings, but I could have taken a nap about then...

Driving to Semler's house, my brain was saying 'early to bed tonight.' My energy was low, but my desire to be with those who were gathering was strong.

Upon arrival the positive attitude was infectious and soon we were sharing about ourselves and I was answering theological and historical questions about the church, and I was revived.

There is always an 'energy' on Monday mornings as volunteers come in to do their work, people stop by with questions and setup for the week ahead, and weekend issues are handled. It is always a flutter of activity. At 10am we had the "Women's Group Meeting. Lots of enthusiasm for the first annual Octoberfest Event. From the original thoughts, we changed the date, we changed the times, we even changed the name, though we changed that back again.

But when we got to 'how many to cook for' the enthusiasm waned. Numbers mentioned were solid and safe. But didn't reach much farther outside the congregation. I reminded them to think greater! After a little coaxing they did and doubled the original estimate. It helped the we serve the community meal shortly after, so if there is leftovers, we will be OK.

For the whole week I wrestled with my sermon title 'Living Enthusiastically.' But I was having difficulty getting enough inspirations, so I kept putting it aside. On Thursday I drove to Green Lake Conference for the Annual Clergy Days. That night as I laid down my head in an unfamiliar setting I was still unsure what to say to you this morning. I only dozed at first and in those moments between wake and asleep, I was inspired.

Let them help you with the sermon! How exciting!

Since this came to me from a Holy Place surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses -hundreds of my colleagues - I am sure the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, and I know you will participate. Does that make you nervous? Don't be! I have a question or two we can work on together: First I realized that we can't 'live enthusiastically' unless we are willing to 'think greater'. Does that make sense?

So here is where I need some help: What are we already thinking about? What are we as the Hayward United Methodist Collective already working on? What are our ministries? Is there value enough in them for us to think beyond where we are now in that ministry? Are they worthy of our greater thoughts?

This year, in this part of the country, the farmers are being blessed by a bountiful harvest. You don't have to be a farmer to know that the corn was beautiful, the beans looked good and the rain was enough. Jesus said: "I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly." Don't we deserve to think greater about what we have and what we do?

Many of us don't consider our lives as abundant, but in comparison to so many others on this earth – we have abundance. For some it is truly about not having, but for most of us it is more about our attitude. We have to get beyond the mentality of scarcity to a mentality of abundance. How do you obtain a better attitude about abundance?

First, by living in a close relationship with God: It takes great thinking to believe in the knowledge that God is pulling for you to be blessed in your life. Some think that they are unworthy, but that is an attitude of scarcity, mixed with some denial of all that Christ has done for you. Some think that they already have it all in abundance, but that is a thought that God isn't any bigger or any more than what you have or where you are at right now.

Spending time expanding your understanding of God can remind you that there is more for you and you are worth it. I think we could call that ministry 'Education.'

Second, you can obtain a better attitude about abundance by making a difference with your life; offering yourself and your gifts to make the World a better place, one person at a time. We offer a multitude of opportunities in this church to make a difference for someone else.

On Monday afternoon, the Outreach Team delivered the school supplies that you had donated to the children at St Francis Mission School. I went along. When we arrived the older students had just received back their entries from the Sawyer County Fair Art and Science exhibits. They showed us accumulated projects from last year's school work. Projects of leaves and pumpkins, turkeys and angels, the manger and the cross, all stacked up together.

We then handed them each a box of crayons.; new Crayola Crayons. None were broken or left over or peeled part way down, but new ones, still with unused tips. Do you remember the smell of new crayons?

Not just pencils, but new pencils. Once of the children went right over to the electric sharpener to get hers to a 'ready to use sharpening; and each one also received a mechanical pencil as well as an eraser.

After all had one of each item for their age level, there were many more items for later in the year.

Before we left we asked if we could come back in the winter with hats and gloves and scarves. The answer "yes, please. Can you come the end of January, after they have lost their beginning winter ones?" That made me think beyond my abundance to that of a child living in Hayward in the long winters, and no replacement plan for warmth. If we just thinking greater... what does 'come share the warmth' mean for us as we look to others without? I think we could call that ministry 'Outreach Missions.'

Third, you can obtain a better attitude about abundance by coming together with others. And here we are, sitting next to one another to praise God; to be uplifted by the scripture, song and preaching. The point is to be together, sharing our joys and our concerns, holding each other up in prayer and thanksgiving for all of the abundance in our lives. Sometimes we sing, sometimes we clap, sometimes we learn a new song...We explore unfamiliar scriptures and rethink some of the old ones. The ministry of 'Worship.'

Living abundantly isn't just celebrating joys, but also sharing sorrows and tears. It is about being able to draw together in our pain and grief; having others to lean on when your abundance is of tears. In the few months that I have been here, I have noticed a real caring spirit of prayer, hugs and meals, when a need arises. Are we as loving when we leave these doors and go out into the community? Are we ready to share the griefs and worries of those we don't know as well? Who needs our love and support beyond these doors?

Sometimes in our lives the abundance comes to us in the form of an abundance of work. Within the last month, some of you have periodically asked me "Did you eat lunch yet? Isn't it time for you to go home now?" We need others to watch out for us within some abundance of our lives, and this comes through the ministry of 'Caring.'

All week long, people come together in this building to do the work of the church. This building exists for the ministries we share. The ministries do not exist to keep the building going. Often we get caught in the attitude of scarcity when we realize what it takes to maintain the building, or pay the bills. We hear the news which says that the world outside these doors is cutting jobs and cutting programs and money is tight.

I know some of you are caught in some of those situations, but every change can be a new opportunity to think greater in another direction.

The building, staff, and leaders are here to facilitate the ministries that we can do together. They are here to enable, equip, empower and encourage the ministries of the church. We get paid – some with finances some with the blessing of serving, to give you wings, freeing you to do ministry. We want to resource, resource, resource.

The staff and leaders work together as a team with each other and with the volunteers and all of the church family. It works because together we have open and often communications. We bounce ideas and dates around to try to include all of the work of the ministries within this building and the time we have to work with.

But the true abundance of the ministries comes from the rest of the volunteers that step up and take part in the leadership and decision making that it takes to keep the ministries happening. We need teams and committees who also share ideas with the ability to look beyond our own agendas for what is the best thing for the ministries of the church.

After we take time to acknowledge and think greater about our ministries, there needs to be a time for thanksgiving and celebration for our abundances. Before we move on to the next thing, we need to surround the ministries we are a part of with prayer and praise to God, the one from whom all ideas come.

We can be Hayward United Methodist Church together. Our Confirmation will combine four parts each month: Service, Mission, Bible Study and Activity. There is value in all four parts for the youth. I have defined mission as what we do outside the door for others, but service is what we do for ourselves in order to make all of the ministries possible. Service for the youth may be helping keep up the church yard or at the Octoberfest Event; being the liturgist or usher or eventually running the computer on Sunday morning.

For others of you service might also include serving on one of the teams or committees. As the pastor, I am the chair of the Nominations Committee. This first year, I hope most of you serving will continue for one more year, until I can get my feet under me...

In the next few weeks I will get out my folder to begin the work of looking over the lists of all of the teams and committees so we can have people ready to serve on January first for next year. This isn't one of my favorite jobs, but I am going to think greater about it this year.

Every year people rotate off and we need you to step up. We will try not to have any unnecessary meetings, and we now we even have the possibility of doing some of those meetings electronically by computer or phone. We need a group for each ministry so the good and bad decisions aren't made by just one or two people. Talk to me if you are willing to serve in some way.

In the September issue of The Good News Letter, there was a letter for you to consider as you think greater about this church and the ministries. Please take time to read it. We are building church of abundant ministries by thinking greater. Together it is easier to live enthusiastically than it is apart..."*For we know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to God's purpose.*"