

### Call to Worship

We are ordinary folk with ordinary weaknesses and limitations. Yet the risen Christ promises to empower us and to infuse us with the same life-giving, powerful Holy Spirit that so empowered him.

**All who love Jesus, all who strive to keep God's commandments, all who are open to the Spirit who leads us, come forward today to praise, to pray, and to proclaim!**

### Prayer of Invocation

Sheltering God, you have pledged through Jesus that you will not leave us orphans.

**As we gather in our worship today, we earnestly pray that you will not abandon us, but will protect us and nurture us, raising us up as your confessing people, that in the manner of our living and the joy of our singing, the peace of our abiding and the strength of our speaking, we may as one receive you and proclaim you, here and the world over. Amen.**

### The Word

Let God rise up; let his enemies scatter; let those who hate him run scared before him!

**Like smoke is driven away, drive them away!**

**Like wax melting before fire, let the wicked perish before God!**

But let the righteous be glad and celebrate before God. Let them rejoice with gladness!

**Sing to God! Sing praises to his name! Exalt the one who rides the clouds!**

**The LORD is his name. Celebrate before him!**

Father of orphans and defender of widows is God in his holy habitation.

**God settles the lonely in their homes; he sets prisoners free with happiness, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.**

When you went forth before your people, God,  
when you marched through the wasteland, the earth shook!

Yes, heaven poured down before God, the one from Sinai—before God, the God of Israel!

**You showered down abundant rain, God; when your inheritance grew weary, you restored it yourself, and your creatures settled in it.**

**In your goodness, God, you provided for the poor.**

### Living the Word

Once a month from May through October the Guardian Pest Control Man comes to Hayward United Methodist Church and sprays – inside and out- so we don't have the 'enemy' encroaching on our building. At his last visit in the Fall he asked me if we would like to pay to have him come during the winter. I checked previous information as found that we hadn't paid for the winter months in the past.

I nicely said "no, thank you." Within a month of his leaving, we found traces of a mouse in the church kitchen. The mouse is no longer in the building. But when the Guardian Pest Control Man came back this Spring, when I told him about the mouse, he gave me an "I told you so..." and added that he had just sprayed for ants along the edge of the garage.

I don't share this so you know how the property is cared for, but to say that God is our ultimate guardian and never failing to be on guard. The one who created us is always with us, not looking for extra payments or deserting when the weather turns cold.. I'm sorry that I said that...we really are thankful that you all come back again. We know that we share you with other places and we are just glad to see you when you arrive.

It might occur to you that God seems to *miss* some of the pests or enemies that torment us. I don't understand all of the mysteries of God, yet God sent Jesus to be our guide through the mazes and messes we have to find our way through. Part of why Jesus was sent is to teach us to be guardians for others. By the stories of his life, we can know how we can see God better and know how to guide others through life as well.

One example is that though Jesus liked his time alone, he traveled with a group, 12 disciples and others; when he sent the disciples out to do the ministry, he sent them by twos. Jesus called all of us to 'go and make more disciples' – in essence growing the group. This was not done for his benefit, or God's benefit, only for our benefit.

There is strength in numbers. This benefit gives us the strength to face the pests, the enemies, that confront us with the understanding that we don't ever go alone. We become guardians and guides for each other. Guardians come in all sizes and shapes.

Police officers, fire fighters, and the military may be the more visible guardians in our lives. For some it is a calling on their life. They have known since they were old enough to speak that someday they would be on a police force, sent out by twos; or a fire department traveling by truck loads, or a military squad marching in rank and file.

Some are called, some are convince through the example of one of the guardians in their lives, some are offered incentives to help them join in. If by incentive, we hope within their guardianship they find examples or a calling so their passion is shown in their work and they become responsible as guardians of others. I would like to believe that all who live vocations such as these, as guardians for us, realized before signing on, that they are offering the risk of life and death.

So tomorrow, we will celebrate those who have died as guardians. **Memorial Day**, an American holiday observed on the last Monday of May which honors men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. Originally known as Decoration **Day** after the American Civil War in 1868, and became an official federal holiday in 1971.

As for today, I wish to celebrate all guardians; all mentioned above who gave their lives for our freedom and all who continue to risk their lives to protect us. Not just those who have died in the guardianship of others, but including the many who give of themselves a part of their lives, according to the guidance they have received from God through Christ, as a guardian of others.

Tuesday evening I was present at the prayer service for the community of Chetek and it's people who are hurting in many ways. Ten United Methodist Pastors were present, including our District Superintendent Kate Jones.

I went not because I knew anyone who was a victim of the tornado, but because I once lived in a mobile home, which was destroyed by fire, and I know the heartbreak of seeing all of your possessions gone or partially destroyed beyond saving. 37 years later the memories of devastation, loss and eventually hope were again like fresh wounds, that I knew many others were now experiencing.

I also went in support of the clergy, who had spent part of the week before with the people as they initially went back to recover some possessions. It takes a lot of emotional energy to walk difficult journeys with people as guardians, and even clergy need guardians to remind them that God is present. I was thanked over and over for coming to share their journey.

We shared scriptures and prayers and silence and song. The service ended with the blessing of 20 piece quilts that were sent from the women of Withee, WI, far to the south of Chetek and many prayer shawls that had

arrived, to be shared by guardians from other communities, to help in the emotional and spiritual recover of these broken people. You see, every time you do onto others as you would have them do to you, in these ways, you become one of God's guardians, guided by Christ.

Here is a list of five of the things that guardians need to know:

1. How to watch for the pests. Sometimes we can see the people we are called to guard coming into harm's way and can steer them in another direction. I believe that God does that, as disaster stories come forth by those who decided for some reason to go a different direction this time and have a near miss with something major...like a tornado's path.

2. Guardians have to be able to live so that the pests don't take over their lives. Has anyone here ever been drawn into something by the great temptations offered to our suppressed desires? It is really much more difficult to fight the pests once you are surrounded by temptation, that to avoid them yourself to begin with. Depression is one of the most difficult pests. In the midst you can convince yourself that that you are unworthy, incapable and unable. To be a guardian for another there is a need to recognize the pests before they take you down.

Jesus had reason to get caught in a downward spiral. The last few weeks of his life, things were pretty much falling apart: disciples didn't seem to be hearing the message and they were squabbling about which one of them was his favorite; their whispering concerns if this guy that rode into Jerusalem, would even be able to rule over Jerusalem; and why had he decided to make a scene outside the temple by ruining the tables set up for the money changers?

But he never lost focus on what he was called to do. He had to face it all moment by moment knowing it was not going to be a good end...until the day of resurrection. Jesus had to trust the guardian, God who had called him for this mission to guide, unto death, what was right, dying to live another day in another way. Today is the last Sunday of Easter, never forget that the cross is eternally empty - Easter is about the resurrection – not the death.

3. Jesus guides how to guard each other in a loving way. Not necessarily gently as often we need to push people out of danger to save them, but to love them enough to do the best thing for them, not just what feels good to us as a guardian. To process what the motivation and the potential results of our actions are before we do something: Who will the outcome benefit?

This is a hard one, as we like to think we know what is best for others, even so, we need to know them to know what is best and consciously put others before ourselves. That is what love really is – loving another as much or more than yourself. Think about the people you have experienced that put others before themselves. Are they an example of who you would want to be as a guardian? Do others pick you out as one of those people they would want to be a guardian for them?

4. A guardian has to know how to prepare themselves in order to not fear the end someday. There are many endings in this life besides death. The end of our favorite TV show, the end of computers as we knew them a few years ago, the end of spring which will lead once again to summer, and then fall and then to winter – again! How we handle changes in life helps those who depend on us for hope in their lives.

We will all die. Probably not soon, but it will come. As a guardian of others we can process ahead our own end and in that way be able to prepare others. Fear is not a loving emotion, and in fact is the opposite of love. Everything that you dislike, worry about or avoid is based on some fear. Being able to see that and get past that fear, makes a guardian able to love.

5. To be a guardian is acknowledging that we are called to do all of this together. In twos or groups – sometimes being the guardian and sometimes being the one that need to be cared for. Sometimes being the church, an extension of Christ's guidance to others, which is ultimately an extension of our Great Creator, who may have been a Wesleyan, because of all of the method God uses to make it all work well when done with love...We are called to be Christ's extension of guardianship as a guide for others.

From the beginning, God wanted humans to follow the plan that was created for them. If you read the whole Biblical story, you find that Abraham followed sometimes God's will, sometimes not. A few generations the people of God told God that they wanted to have judges sent to guide them be the people following the way.

After all the pagan people down the road had judges, why can't we? So God sent judges, even though God wanted the people to follow what they had the guidance that they had been given from God. It worked for a while. Then the people of God wanted a King to guide them, after all the judge thing wasn't working anymore and the people in the next town had kings. God ached for the people to remember all the guidance they had been given to follow only one God. Even so, he gave them a series of kings.

There is a section of history when the timeline reads: good King, bad king, good king, bad king – over and over. So God took control and sent his Son to save the people. We still are trying to follow the guidance of Christ and missing the mark that God had set for us..

Until then we will still go to see movies about comic book heroes, called the Guardians of the Galaxy, with special powers and weapons might save the day – at least for the day. I haven't gone to see it, because we call it science fiction, not my movie genre of choice. Even so the Holy Spirit can even work through such a movie. According to Chris Pratt, who plays 'Star-Lord' the film's script helped him come to terms with the death of his father.

I believe that God yearns for us to be at peace, which would mean no more need for guns and bombs and missiles and threats of all of it; no more need for police and military carrying weapons...but we are not there yet. I also believe that someday, Christ will come again and somehow it will end with God as the victor – no more fighting, just dependence on the one true Guardian of the Galaxy, God.