

Call to Worship

From every walk of life we have come, wearied, wandering, frustrated, broken, yet determined to return to the place where we have found the peace that passes understanding.

Here in this place your Spirit has washed away the grime of our lives and left us feeling renewed, restored, revived!

We thank you, God of all times and seasons, that you are always present, always ready, and always visible in the sisters and brothers who share this place with us.

We come, confident of your presence and grateful for your mercy.

Prayer of Invocation

God of Search and Celebration, as we come together for worship this day we unite in gratitude with all others who have known your persistence and patience, who have been sought by your Spirit and warmed by your love, who rejoice in be found and numbered in Jesus' sheepfold. Remind us of how inclusive you are in your caring, how relentless in your search, how recklessly abandoned you are in love for humanity. Equip us to work with you, to assist the gathering in that we may celebrate together, praising your name. Amen

*The Word I Timothy 1:12-17 from the Common English Bible.

*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength because he considered me faithful. So he appointed me to ministry even though I used to speak against him, attack his people, and I was proud. **But I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and without faith. Our Lord's favor poured all over me along with the faithfulness and love that are in Christ Jesus.***

This saying is reliable and deserves full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I'm the biggest sinner of all. But this is why I was shown mercy, so that Christ Jesus could show his endless patience to me first of all.

So I'm an example for those who are going to believe in him for eternal life. Now to the king of the ages, to the immortal, invisible, and only God, may honor and glory be given to him forever and always! Amen.

Living the Word "A Time of Celebration" Pastor Cathy Hamblin

When we stumble and fall in life, sometimes it is harder to get back up. As we get older, we guard ourselves closer – less recklessness, more caution and watching where we step – as it takes more time to heal and now there are parts of us that may never completely recover. Even so as we get older, we have gathered more experience and wisdom about life in general.

When I arrived here just over a year ago, this church was recovering from a stumble, I also was Spiritually healing from a disappointment in the last church. Often when we are broken and hurting, even a little, it is hard to see clearly. Yet, I saw (and still do) a great potential in this church and you did the same for me. Together, we needed each other to move forward in ministry to each other, our community and the world.

Wednesday, I traveled to Green Lake Conference Center at the Bishop's request, to join all of the United Methodist Clergy in Wisconsin. Some of your former clergy asked about you...Pastor Dan Fahs sends his greetings. The event is called 'School of Ministry' and the speaker, Margaret Marcuson, spoke to us about how we listen.

As one who loves to share stories and talk, I needed this reminder...She took us through many listening exercises and prayers. Around this was good food and fellowship, catching up with colleagues.

Through the years I have found that what I respond to people tells where my heart really is. Two years ago it was "I'm OK." Last year it was a feeble "Good," and this year it was "I'm great!" I have you to thank for that.

Thursday as we were going to lunch, I saw a Korean couple that I hadn't met so I went over and introduced myself. They are the new pastors at Tomahawk UMC. I told them that Hayward was as far north, and asked them if they had ever experienced snow. They responded "No, but we are really excited." My advice was: get mittens and warm socks!

Then at my shoulder was Bishop Jung, who said: "I am so glad that you have met Pastor Cathy, she is one of the strong leaders in Wisconsin and can teach you." He then went into Korean and they spoke back and forth for a bit. I was unable to understand anything. So as they finished, I told them all that I wanted to learn from them as well. Could they teach me some Korean? So together they taught me to say Hello – 'on young.' I can hardly wait see them again so I can use it and learn another word...

A year ago, we began a fall program with the catch line "Think Greater." It allowed us to look forward in great hope for the future of this church.

When we work hard for a goal, even if the goal is no more than to 'Think Greater' we get excited and celebrate when we get a good word of encouragement from someone we value. It makes us want to we sing and dance. We have no need to gloat in front of anyone about our accomplishments, but we can celebrate!

The word from Paul to Timothy begins with thanksgiving to Christ. We need to give gratitude where it is due, as the good that is happening is from carrying out God's will as individuals in the community of faith known as Hayward United Methodist Church. Like Paul, God has found us faithful and given us strength and appointed us ministers.

Like Paul, even though we haven't always done everything correct, God has shown us great mercy, by carrying us through to a place where we are now able to 'Think Greater!' God stays with us and does have endless patience with us, just as he did with the Apostle Paul.

Sometimes we have to sink beyond where we ever thought we could go before we can begin to know and feel God's mercy happening in our lives. Then when we begin to look beyond our difficulties and join forces with God and those around us, we can accomplish great things! Often the surprise is that we accomplish not through those who seem to hold the power, but by those who we would never expect to be the leader.

Sometimes it takes all of us to support a good idea. We need to cheer each other on, as we have been doing this last year. We really began thinking greater with the 1st Annual Oktoberfest planning. On faith we expanded what we thought we could do from planning to serve 100 to purchasing enough food for 200. It was a step of faith, and as it was my suggestion, I prayed a lot! "Lord, please send at least 105 people so we need some of the extra food!

You donated food, you set up tables, you cooked and cooked, you served; and the people came. Final tally: 170 people. Thank you Jesus! The cost was all donation and that final number \$1615.00 was split equally between Salvation Army and our other ministries. So this year, let's do it again! Know that word has gotten out and the Lutherans are going to bring friends! So we have upped the amount of food to feed 225. Keep praying with me and invite everyone you know! Then process how you can be a part of your church's 2nd Annual Oktoberfest...

That is the church at it's best! There isn't enough time to share all of the good news from this last year of Thinking Greater, but I will point out a few more today and many more over the next six weeks.

Last summer, 2016 we were running financially between the black and red line. Two years ago, we were also behind on giving our missional share to the Conference by \$5,000. This summer that giving has been current all year and we have enough to pay our monthly bills with a little left over.

How does that happen? It was pointed out last Fall that we live in abundance and shouldn't have to worry about money, but to share what we can, when we can. Some were able to give more, some have changed to electronic giving. We did it together.

The trustees have coordinated roofing, painting inside – the Fellowship Hall and the Sanctuary, outside the stucco above the rocks. This large yard is mowed by volunteers each week and the Memorial Garden continues to look beautiful, the new bark really sets it off. When I am here, I notice community people coming to walk through and sit to enjoy some peace. Occasionally there are sightings of deer and other smaller critters enjoying it, too.

The screen is back in use, which now includes a power point team to put it together and a tech team to run things. We have two historians, who will be working together to update and file pictures and preserve our story.

We have served numerous times at the Wednesday night Community meals, gathered baby clothes, school supplies, hats and mittens for those who need. Thousands of dollars have been given to disaster relief, education programs, housing for the homeless and other programs in need both locally and around the world.

We are present in the Sawyer County Record for the community to know us better and to be able to find us through a weekly listing, monthly articles and pictures of our opportunities to share what we gather for others.

As I reflect on all I have come to know about this congregation over the last year, it is the nurture and care that you share with each other here in this church that stands out to me. The sick are visited and fed. You help me to stay informed with how others are doing.

On Thursday after the clergy conference was ended, I drove to Illinois to be with Bill and Abby on Friday for Alane's memorial service. I was a small gathering, Christy couldn't be there as she is in the hospital and their son Will had just been there for 4 days and wasn't able to return. So I sat behind them and told them that you were all there with me. They were so thankful for our presence there. I felt you with me there and I know that Bill and Abby did to, just as they have through this journey with Alane and the continuing journey with Christy. That is who we are in this church: pray-ers, friends, family together.

It was called a Celebration of Life. Alane's husband bravely got up and spoke of Alane's great suffering and deep faith through it all. He shared about her generous care for those around her and how he loved her. Two witnesses from her church shared what she had taught them about strength and perseverance. They played a video to go with the song 'On Eagles Wings.' It reminded me of Hayward with the eagle flying over the woods and lakes, and I was reminded of Alane's childhood visits here in this area of Wisconsin.

Not all celebrations are based on happy times. Sometimes we have to look back from an ending and remember, to find the celebration. Last Sunday Wayne and Donna Breselow announced that they had sold their house and would move by the end of the month. I spoke to them this week and they will be moving over the this weekend and next and we may not see them again. The address in the directory is good for one more week if you want to send them a card and we will get the new address to those who would like it. They also promised that they would be back to visit sometime.

Today we are celebrating Mike and Connie Hatch, who have been a vital part of the ministry in the last year especially, as Mike led paint teams, changed light bulbs, kept track of mice apprehension, furnace filters and many other building details. Connie is the best evangelist for God that I've had as a parishioner. She is a ferocious reader, a powerful example to others in her devotional life and tells everyone she sees where she goes to church. She greets everyone she doesn't know and begins right away to build relationship with them.

Trying to downsize for their new place she gave me one of her older Bibles. Inside the cover she had written a statement of faith for herself. When I read it I asked permission to share it with you. It is dated February 21, 2004. "After reading 'The Purpose Driven Life' by Rick Warren, I am writing my own purpose of my life. My life purpose is to worship Christ with all my heart, mind soul and body.

I will continue a ministry of music and be devoted to serving a church. I will grow in the fellowship of family and spread the word of Christ so that all my loved ones will meet me in heaven. I will be a messenger of His word by my acts deeds and voice. I will continue to grow in Christ through Bible Study, reading and discussion. I will praise His Holy name at every opportunity."

As Paul wrote to Timothy: "*I'm an example for those who are going to believe in him for eternal life.*" Today we celebrate that all good comes from God.

Just as at Alane's memorial service, it is hard to celebrate when a part of our family is moving on. Connie told me this week that she would have to bring a box of Kleenex today to get through saying goodbyes. Sharing our lives isn't always easy, but the value of what we receive is found in the blessings of how we can grow through the experience of being with others. In this way we are accepting our responsibility as Christians working together for the Lord.

In Luke 12:48 Jesus says: *Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.*

But here is the thing, it feels so good when we know that we have all had a part in making goodness happen through our ministries of outreach, worship, education, nurture and caring, and all to God's glory. When we get behind a goal, with God leading, we all feel able to continue to 'Think Greater' and we are all blessed in the doing.

Paul wrote "*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength because he considered me faithful. So he appointed me to ministry even though I used to speak against him, attack his people, and I was proud.*" Despite our human-ness we have all been called to faithful ministry in Christ's name, when we do – that is who we are created to be and why we can celebrate!

PRAY: Lord, help us to keep thinking greater no matter where you send us next. We thank you for this church, we know it is part of your plan that we are here: for each other, for this community and for however we can change the world, all to your glory.