

### Call to Worship

Thanks be to God, Jesus does not ask most of us to do spectacular, heroic things in service to the kingdom.  
**It's often the little things that count in our discipleship. Jesus asks us to do what we can to, in his name, reach out to the "least of these," offering small gestures of mercy that we can. We can do this!**

The peace of Christ calls us!  
**The people of Christ respond.**

### Prayer of Invocation

**Shepherd of our souls, we gather together with grateful hearts. We lift up our voices in word and song. Holy Spirit, come and be with us now. Our hope and desire is that you will continue to call us together as your worshipping people, and send us out to bless others. Amen.**

### The Word

Matthew 25:31-40 Common English Bible

"Now when the Human One comes in his majesty and all his angels are with him, he will sit on his majestic throne. All the nations will be gathered in front of him.

**He will separate them from each other, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right side. But the goats he will put on his left.**

"Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who will receive good things from my Father. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.'  
**"Then those who are righteous will reply to him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'**

"Then the king will reply to them, 'I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.'

### Living the Word

"Caring Ministries"

Pastor Cathy Hamblin

Last week, the budget we finance was divided into the ministries that we as Hayward United Methodist Church, serve. They are the Ministries of Outreach, Nurture and Care, Worship and Education. Christ's example to us is especially vivid to us in John 13 as he takes on the part of a servant to wash the disciple's feet. It was not traditional for this to happen and he was working out of the box – 'Thinking Greater' to teach the disciples who they/and we need to be for each other.

In the book of James 1:27 it says – "*True devotion, the kind that is pure and faultless before God the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their difficulties.*" This is more caring than just saying the words "I really care about you, man." The ministry of caring is doing something with your caring, according to the gifts you have been given.

We have a fund here at the church entitled the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. It is for special gifts above and beyond the budget. When it gets low we invite you through announcements, the bulletin or The Good News Letter, our newsletter, to chip in some funds. Some of it is used to support the work at Salvation Army, but some of it is given out as small, no interest loans when unexpected needs comes into the lives of one of our church family.

The Stephen Ministry program has been set aside for the present, but those care givers, who have been well trained in caring for those who are hurting, are combining with the Nurture and Care Ministry to move into the future with new opportunities to serve this church and the community.

Both the men's group and the 'Women in Conversation' that meet each month, always have time for sharing joys and concerns and they help each other out when needed. The Nurture and Care Team have someone to send out greeting cards and schedule meals for a family when that is needed.

As we serve Holy Communion in the front of the sanctuary, you may have heard it announced that we now have gluten-free wafers for those who need them. If the ushers see someone in the congregation that may not be able to come to the front for Holy Communion, they are instructed to let one of the servers, or myself know so all that wish to receive, do. We care that all can be served and partake.

Home communion is one of the new programs that could be developed with the help of the trained Stephen Ministers. We would be able to deliver Communion to shut-ins who are unable to attend services here at the church by myself and by lay people. The bread and juice are blessed as one, with the blessing we share here, before it is delivered. In this way we are the body of Christ, sharing in one loaf, even sometimes from a distance.

At a wedding I once attended these verses were shared from the book of Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 It is a great scripture for a wedding, but also for our caring ministries: *"Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work. If either should fall, one can pick up the other. But how miserable are those who fall and don't have a companion to help them up! Also, if two lie down together, they can stay warm. But how can anyone stay warm alone? Also, one can be overpowered, but two together can put up resistance. A three-ply cord doesn't easily snap."*

What I really heard as it was read to me were three words – one, miserable and alone. Have any of you ever felt lonely? We need to care for those who have no choice and are left in their loneliness. Regular calls and visits are made to those who are unable to come to the church for worship. Home visits and nursing home visits can be made as often as possible to those who live alone, or just need some company. If God touches your heart to help with this ministry, then we could do more...

We are on an Ecumenical rotation for Nursing Home Worship Services at Waters Edge and Golden Living. I was doing it alone, yet since Spring we have had four or more joining me and though we use scripture and prayers, we do mostly music & singing – sometimes to piano, sometime acapella and sometimes with harmonica! We would enjoy sharing this with others of you as well.

On Easter Sunday afternoon, I shared worship just down the street at another nursing facility...I was double blessed to sing the Easter hymns twice that day.

Hospital visits are made here in Hayward, but also at other hospitals as well...when we are notified of a need. We no longer get calls from the hospital to let us know you are there, so it is best to have a family member call us if you are unable to make the call yourself. When I get a call from a hospital, I come, often not knowing what has happened or what I am needed for. As soon as I hang up the phone I begin to pray for God to be known in the situation and that I will be able to minister to those who need it.

Prayer also happens as I enter the nursing homes, and every time one of you asks me a question. I believe in prayer. As I offer myself, my gifts and my ministry to others, God uses me to bring peace, comfort and sometime just presence, to traumatic moments. Your support of my work makes it possible for me to be there.

The church is a house of prayer and prayer is a caring ministry. Each of our Confirmation students had one or more Prayer Mentors. The mentors were given pictures of the students and asked to pray for them every day,

posting the picture on their dresser, mirror or refrigerator so they see it each day. Our youth need our prayers. How many of you could use someone praying for you each day? This is a simple way to serve the church and we should all be praying for each other – that leaves room for us to 'think greater' in prayer ministry.

Another of our caring ministries is the Prayer Shawl Ministry. As the knitting and crocheting needles work yarn into a soft blanket to be wrapped around someone in need of a hug, prayers are said; prayers for healing, prayers for peace, prayers for God's grace. It has also become an outreach as I had a request from our webpage and sent one last Spring to Alabama. Another just went to a local person who was at the church for an outside group using our building.

In my years as a pastor, I have received three prayer shawls. The first is green and was given to me when my son, Jeff was in Iraq with the marines. I've cried many tears into that shawl. It is kept in my reading space at home. The second I received from a lay person who asked me to teach her to crochet so she could make a prayer shawl. It is multicolored because she did one row of my shawl with the scrap ends of the many prayer shawls she has made. I received it at the closing worship service for the Whispering Pines Church Camp; another difficult time for me. It is over one of the chairs in my office.

The third prayer shawl was given to me by my clergy colleagues in the Eau Claire circuit I served, when I had just found out that I had breast cancer. It was delivered as they all laid hands on me and prayed for healing. Keep these precious reminders of the caring of others in various places readily available for when I or someone else might need a hug.

We have a great selection of prayer shawls on hand. If you know someone who is hurting and might need something filled with prayers to wrap in, hold on to or cry into, please pick one up to give them; and as we give them away, we will need more who knit and crochet to care through prayers.

Methodists are traditionally great at committees. Church meetings and gatherings go on around here regularly and often. Before they are begun, a devotional or prayer is shared. In this way we invite God into the work we will do and the decisions we will make. Often as we pray for what is on our hearts, we include specific, known concerns of the congregation.

Misty Moganson, the Dementia Specialist did a forum in September to give us a better understanding about dementia. If there are other programs that would help us care for each other, let's schedule them.

We offer forms for Health Care Power of Attorney and Pre Funeral Planning, trying to make things easier for your families someday as they have to make decisions in the initial grief of your death. The whole church comes together when we have to put together a memorial or funeral service and lunch. If you are grieving, please let me know and I will try to work through some of it with you. When we share our grief, the burden lightens. If you feel comfortable sharing your heartaches and grief with this congregation – I know there are prayer warriors always ready to lift you up to God.

On Sundays we ask for prayer concerns and we lift them during Joys and Concerns in collective prayer to God. In this way we continue to care for each other. We don't need to know all of the details, as God already does, but we serve each other as we pray. When you receive your newsletter – The Good News Letter, you are invited once again to pray for the programs and people of the church. There, and in the bulletin you may find the anniversaries, birthdays and many options for your prayers.

In the Midweek Update, I try to send out email notices for specific prayer needs and announcements – this goes to the whole church email list, but if you don't want it that public, but would like prayers for something, you can call me on my cell phone. Please email or call if you have a concern to be prayed for or if you are willing to be added to the email list.

*Jesus said, 'I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.'* If we take this to our hearts and continue to 'think greater' our ministry of caring has

much room for expansion. Toward the end of each year, we write a new ministry plan for the church, which includes goals as we look forward.

Our plan for 2018 will include one or two goals for each ministry area. You may be the key to a new caring ministry. It may be a one-time event or an ongoing ministry. I invite you to listen for where God might be inviting you to 'Think Greater' with your gifts for ministry.

Options might include a Parish Nurse ministry with blood pressure checks on Sunday mornings, caring ministry to new neighbors, new babies, when one of us gets hurt or sick. When we care for each other and are strong together, our example reaches beyond us to missions for the world.

"Come Share the Warmth" has to be more than just words on the sign out front. Don't you care at all? Of course you do! How do you live that out? All of our ministries overlap, in its essence it is all one ministry, the ministry of Christ, as we are called to live as Christians.