

"The Next Chapter"
May 21, 2017

Psalm 66:8-20

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Hayward United Methodist Church

Call to Worship

With stone and mortar – this building was built.

With joy, tears, and much work – this place of worship was created. Yet... this building is only a monument. It is we that are the "living stones". God fills us with the Holy Spirit and we are 'built into a spiritual house.'

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty God, you have raised up servants to proclaim the gift of redemption and a life of holiness.

For our spiritual forebears, we give thanks. In their ministry, through their difficulties, and in spite of their weaknesses, you were their hope and their salvation. You led them and their followers to create the heritage that is ours.

We praise you for the women and men, young and old, who followed them, who gave themselves unselfishly for the welfare of the Church, whose commitment and vision encouraged and supported the Church.

Their talents, enthusiasm, idealism, and dedication infused the Church with energy. Their outstanding gifts and witness shaped our thought and life.

And we give you thanks for the place of our rich tradition among the churches which comprise the Body of Christ.

With all your people throughout creation, give us a new vision, new love, new wisdom, and fresh understanding, that we may serve you more fully; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. CHARLES YRIGOYEN

The Word

Psalm 66:8-20

Common English Bible

All you nations, bless our God! Let the sound of his praise be heard!

God preserved us among the living; he didn't let our feet slip a bit.

But you, God, have tested us—you've refined us like silver, trapped us in a net, laid burdens on our backs, let other people run right over our heads — we've been through fire and water.

But you brought us out to freedom! So I'll enter your house with entirely burned offerings. I'll keep the promises I made to you, the ones my lips

uttered, the ones my mouth spoke when I was in deep trouble.

I will offer the best burned offerings to you along with the smoke of sacrificed rams. I will offer both bulls and goats.

Come close and listen, all you who honor God; I will tell you what God has done for me: My mouth cried out to him with praise on my tongue. If I had cherished evil in my heart, my Lord would not have listened.

But God definitely listened. He heard the sound of my prayer. Bless God! He didn't reject my prayer; he didn't withhold his faithful love from me.

Today is Heritage Sunday, recognized by the United Methodist Church as an opportunity to look back at where we have come from and where we might be headed. It is celebrated on the Sunday closest to May 24, which is Aldersgate Sunday – the day John Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed and he knew in that moment that even he was loved by God.

But how did Wesley get to that point? Let's go all the way back to the first reports of our God in history: 5000 BC Abraham, Pack your stuff...Said yes to God –1st covenant: "You will be my people, I will be your God."

1450 BC Moses said no and then yes to God, led the people out of Egypt – 40 years wandering...

1000 BC King David tended sheep, killed Goliath, a great King, tempted by Bathsheba

4BC – 33 AD Jesus (read the 4 Gospels) taught us how to live, die and live again. A new covenant story...

30 AD Christian church began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit

33 AD Paul, a Jewish Roman, persecutor of the Christians - conversion experience – joined the disciples in travel to share the good news taught by Christ – letter to the churches about how to 'be church'

35 AD The gospels began to be written. Off and on for about 300 years the Christians were persecuted, especially by the Roman government.

330 AD –The Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian and the atmosphere changed. Later his grandson made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

381, 390 – Nicene and Apostle's Creed

1053 - Soon differences in language, culture and understandings of faith (not to mention issues of who had the power!) caused a split. The results were the eastern or Orthodox Church(Greek, Russian and others) and the western branch, which later was known as the Roman Catholic Church.

1517 – Since the church is made up of imperfect people, over time some pretty imperfect practices grew up in the church. A Roman Catholic monk, Martin Luther, wrote out 95 points of things he felt the church was doing against God's will and posted them on the church door to call for reform in the church.

Example of one of the points was the Church of that time required payment for forgiveness and blessings from the priests. Luther proclaimed that we are not saved by the priest, but by God's grace alone..

This may have only stirred things up in that little corner of the world, except for the fact that the printing press had recently been invented. The word spread. Other people joined the protest against the abuses of the faith. Soon the complaint became a movement, called the protestant reformation.

This year is the 500 Anniversary of the birth of the Reformation. Then again the church split; this time, into Catholics and Protestants. However, the Protestants didn't all agree about how the reform should go. Lutherans followed Luther's ideas. Calvinists followed another reformer. John Calvin. Baptists also came on the scene. Their major differences with other reformers was over (you guessed it) Baptism.

1534 - One loyal Roman Catholic during this time was King Henry VIII of England. However, when he wanted to divorce his wife and the pope said 'no,' Henry conveniently became a protestant, divorced several wives and formed his own church – the Church of England. Of course, religion wasn't the real issue, greed and power played a big part in that mess. (are we surprised.?). Wolf Hall by Hilary Mantel.

Like Luther, John Wesley didn't want to start a new church, but reform parts of the Church of England, which he had grown up with and dearly loved. But so many people responded to the good news and Wesley's method of organization ("Method – ists")and soon the Church of England found itself bypassed by the rapidly spreading Methodist Movement.

1735 - Methodism crossed the ocean to America and then the rivers, mountains and all kinds of terrain. Despite the hardships, Circuit riders took the gospel and the Methodist way throughout the American frontier. It took each Circuit Rider 5-6 weeks to cover most circuits they were assigned to, some only say the preacher once a quarter.

1784 - 50 years later there were almost 15,000 Methodist members and 83 preachers.

1839 – within another 50 years there were 750,000 Methodist members, over 3500 traveling preachers and almost 6000 local preachers.

What was happening in Hayward WI? In the 1870's, Hayward's founder, Anthony Judson Hayward, visited the area and saw that a very large and seemingly inexhaustible supply of pine lumber made the area a prime location for a lumber mill. The high banks of the Namekagon River made it an ideal location for a wood pond, and the railroad being built to Ashland created a means to transport the sawn lumber from the mill to the market.

The railroad was constructed during the summer of 1881 and by the summer of 1882, power dams were constructed on the Namekagon River. The dams powered a small lumber mill, which provided lumber to build the stores, the boarding houses, several private residences, and a larger mill that was completed in 1883.

In that year, Sawyer County was formed, and Hayward became the county seat. The first public school, a multi-purpose building near the lumber mill, was built in 1884, and burned down in 1885. It was rebuilt, and burned down again in 1922. But, the spark of education survived! Still, the fire of 1922 marked a turning point for the Hayward economy, because it also destroyed the old mill. By that time, most of the pine lumber had been cut down and shipped away, only remnant pine was left.

In the midst of the logging era in Hayward, 1893-1919, the Hayward Norwegian and Danish Methodist Episcopal Church was formed. It was only here for 26 years. In that time it had 30 members and 138 baptisms. Hayward changed a lot after the logging was done and the Mill burned, but the community continued to grow as logging was replaced with tourism.

65 years later, in 1984, a small group of 23 people, chartered the Hayward United Methodist Church. The brochure read "We are on the map and on the move." "Going Growing Strong" Ten years later, in the Spring of 1994, the brochure now read "Hayward United Methodist Church – Reaching Up, Reaching Out for God!"

The Witness and Growth meeting minutes began with this scripture: *How are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?*

Next was the mission statement: (Which you will find on the front of your bulletin) "Through the power of the Holy Spirit, members of the Hayward United Methodist Church are called to worship and action, with the guidance of scripture, to be witnesses of Jesus Christ to all people.

Unified through scripture, worship gifts, and prayer, we find strength to reach out and meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of ourselves, fellow Christians, and most importantly others. We accept these challenges and the sacrifices they bring as we boldly share the love and redemption of God through Jesus Christ!"

Part of the Council minutes that same month, read like this: "Our brochure is finished and we have started production. Some are available in the narthex. Greeter guidelines will be posted by the usher's table.

They are as follows: Be to the church by 10am (worship was 10:30). Find the greeter pins on the usher table. Make yourself a nametag. Welcome everyone as they come through the door, especially visitors. Be prepared to point out coat racks, bathrooms, and the nursery for visitors. Don't worry about visitor's names, just say 'good morning'. Greet until the service starts. Immediately after worship, go to the door., and thank people for coming as they leave."

Sounds familiar doesn't it? In some ways we should still hone our hospitality skills each Spring, just as we have been for over 30 years as this congregation of United Methodists. I know that not all people get as excited looking back as history as I do, but hopefully it helps us realize how God has continued to share the good news of faith and love for thousands of years.

This isn't simply a story of history, but a legacy of what people who believe in the power of love can do together. I have given you mostly dates and fact...there are so many more stories that need to be told.

For instance, on the day of Ruth Stockwell's funeral when we surrounded Sue Moeller, her daughter in a group hug, here in the narthex and someone said "I just don't know how people get through the hard things without each other."

We need to not just offer that same opportunity to others, but share the stories that make them a part of God's loving community for their hard times. When we sing Shalom at the end of the service, it is a moment of giving and receiving the peace that God calls all of us to.

For the visitor, be sure they can see the screen, because they might get frustrated, lost or scared of what is happening, especially if they are fumbling to read their bulletin or shy about holding your hand. If they can get past the logistics, they may be able to enjoy 'the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.'

Our future looks bright, but it also takes some work on our parts...Two weeks until Summer worship is at 9am.

On Sunday mornings I pray: Lord, this morning, let the people find their way to God; and Lord, if it be your will, send some to Hayward United Methodist Church...Amen.