



PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

November 22, 2020

*Connecting with the Community,
Growing Disciples, and Serving Jesus Christ*

*Our Worship can be viewed on our website
PantherValleyChurch.org*

FRIENDS ~ FAMILY ~ FAITH

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 100)

ONE: Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

ALL: Worship the LORD with gladness; come into God's presence with singing.

ONE: Know that the LORD is God. It is God that made us, and we are God's;

ALL: We are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture.

ONE: Enter God's gates with thanksgiving, and God's courts with praise.

ALL: Give thanks to God, bless God's name.

ONE: For the LORD is good; God's steadfast love endures forever,

ALL: And God's faithfulness to all generations.

OPENING PRAYER

How we underestimate your compassion, Jesus; we are too easily convinced that you frown more than you smile, that our weakness and ignorance, our mistakes and sins, guarantee nothing but judgement from you. Yet, time and again you show us that this picture is unworthy of you; after all, you said it – you didn't come to judge but to save!

And so, we thank you and celebrate you:

Your compassion is limitless, and your love is unending;

Your welcome is gracious and extravagant and all-inclusive;

Your embrace is healing and transforming;

And your commitment to us is costly and eternal.

Perhaps we will never really understand how you can be so totally for us, but perhaps, as we learn to trust, and to lean into your love, we will find the peace and wholeness that you desire for us.

And so we come, we worship, and we open ourselves to your surprising compassion again. Amen.

SONG

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

We are called to bring hope, to share a word of grace, to carry healing into the brokenness of the lives around us. Let us confess how we still struggle to follow in faith wherever Jesus leads us. Join me as we pray, saying,

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Timeless God, you cast Light into sin's dark places and call us your Beloved.

Forgive us:

**when we still linger in the shadows;
when we treat others in hurtful ways;
when we speak ill of your friends.**

As he knelt in the waters of Jordan, you proclaimed Jesus as your Child, pointing to him as the way to you.

Forgive us:

**when we put ourselves ahead of him;
when we think he is no longer needed;
when we fail to see him in the broken of our world.**

Baptized and blessed in your living waters, you would have us be your servants in our time.

Forgive us:

**when we fail to welcome the stranger;
when we refuse to forgive as we should;
when we believe we are too good to kneel down
and tie the shoes of the lost, the least, the last, the little.**

Assurance of Pardon

Touched by the waters of life, fed at the feast of grace and hope, embraced in the warmth of God's love and hopes - this is good news!

Blessed by baptism's tears, called to servanthood by the Beloved, filled with the peace of the Spirit, we are indeed God's people - redeemed, restored, refreshed to serve. Thanks be to God! Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING:

Ephesians 1:15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised

him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

MESSAGE

BAPTISM OF CONNOR SAMANNS THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Sisters and brothers in Christ: through the sacrament of baptism God's Spirit initiates us into Christ's holy church, puts us on the stage of God's saving drama, and gives us new birth through water and the Spirit. So, come to the water -- water poured over and immersing us, water flowing freely for all who will receive it, water from the streams of God's saving power and justice, water that brings hope to all who thirst for righteousness, water that refreshes life, nurtures growth, and offers new birth.

Here we come to the waters, to baptize a child, and in each other's presence to renew our commitments to Christ who has raised us, the Spirit who has birthed us, and the Creator who is making all things new.

PRESENTATION OF THE CANDIDATE

Minister: On behalf of the Ecumenical Council, I present Connor, son of Bettina and John Samanns, to receive the sacrament of Baptism.

Connor, do you desire to be baptized?

I do.

John and Bettina, do you promise, through prayer and example, to support and encourage Connor to be a faithful Christian?

John and Bettina: I do.

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?

I do.

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

I do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

I do.

According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?

I will.

Will you who sponsor these candidates support and encourage them in their Christian life?

I will.

Do you, as Christ's body, the Church, reaffirm both your rejection of sin and your commitment to Christ?

We do.

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include Connor now before you in your care?

With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround Connor with a community of love and forgiveness, that he may grow in his trust of God, and be found faithful in his service to others.

We will pray for him, that he may be a true disciple who walks in the way that leads to life.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

Let us join together in professing the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

ONE: The Spirit of the Lord is with us.

ALL: Even so, come Lord Jesus!

ONE: Let us pray. Almighty God, the life you birthed in us by baptism into Jesus Christ will never die. Your justice never fails. Your mercy is everlasting.

ALL: Your healing river flows. Your Spirit blows where you will. We cannot stop you, God!

ONE: But sometimes we try. We try to block the flow, we redirect the winds of the Spirit, or we walk so far away from the life-giving Stream that we do not hear its sound, and we forget its power. We parch ourselves.

ALL: We are dry and thirsty, O God. Come, refresh us!

ONE: Come upon us, Holy Spirit!

ALL: Come upon us, Holy Spirit! Come upon these waters. Come upon these waters.

Let these waters be to us drops of your mercy.

Let these waters remind us of your righteousness and justice.

Let these waters renew in us the resurrection power of Jesus.

Let these waters make us long for your coming reign.

Eternal God, One in Three and Three in One!

All glory is yours, now and forever. Amen!

BAPTISM

Connor, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit work with you, that being born through water and the Spirit, you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us welcome our new brother in Christ. Child of God by water and the Spirit.

Congregation: We welcome you into God's new creation. Share with us in Christ's royal priesthood. With joy and thanksgiving, we welcome you as a member of Christ's church.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

*Today's flowers are given by
the Pflugfelder Family in loving memory of Bruce Mueller*

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Accept and bless these wonderful gifts that they may be used to serve you by serving others in need. AMEN.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Credits: Today's Liturgy is adapted from: Opening Prayer, John van de Laar,
Cover photot: Begging Jesus by Timothy P Schmalz

Hanging of the Greens Open House

Sunday December 6, 10:30am – 12:30pm

As you start to prepare for this Christmas Season take a journey to know, understand and enjoy the meanings of the Christmas symbols! You are welcome to arrive at any time. Invite a friend! (We suggest allowing 20 – 30 minutes.)

PVEC Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday December 6, 1:00pm

Via Zoom Meeting ID: 827 5185 6086 Passcode: 1490

Blue Christmas Open House

Friday December 18, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

People have undergone unprecedented loss this year. Family and friends have succumbed to death in this pandemic, millions have lost economic security through loss of jobs, some have lost businesses they built over a lifetime. Most of us have lost our beloved rhythms of life that felt familiar and gave our lives the richness of gatherings and adventure.

Throughout Advent we proclaim hope, love, joy, and peace. This is the church's gift to the world—that our faith story is grounded in the presence of God that came and dwelt among us, during hardship. But on this night we gather to acknowledge and remember what we have lost. It is important to name that sometimes hope, love, joy, and peace are distant feelings when we have encountered so much loss.

Come when you can and stay as long as you wish.

PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

1490 Route 517 Hackettstown, NJ 07840

Pastor: Ninabeth Metcalf, Music Director: Diane Van Dongen

Church Secretary:

Office hours: Mon. – Fri. 9:00am – 2:00pm

Website: <http://www.panthervalleychurch.org>

Tel: 908-852-5444 Fax: 908-850-4754 Email: Panthervalleychurch@gmail.com