

COMMUNION SUNDAY

1/9/22

10:00 a.m.

PRELUDE *Gather Us In* Deb Verdegan, Piano

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, & INVITATION TO OFFERING
Rev. Cathy Christman

INTROIT *Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)*
Deb Verdegan, Piano

CENTERING WORDS AND OPENING PRAYER

L: The church at Corinth was not much different than we are today. It had divided loyalty to different leaders. The church lived to tolerate rather than to hold accountable. The church was battling in the courts rather than communicating through healthy means. The church was confused about marriage and celibacy; food laws and religion; freedom and faith. It was as imperfect then as we are today.

Their imperfections were affected more than just the church. Paul raised his concerns about this, trying to point them all to Jesus. Instead of hearing him, they questioned his abilities, character and authority. The broken relationships led to continued chaos and a greater need for the message of the Gospel.

This chaos, though, served as the backdrop for Paul's most profound teaching concerning the true wisdom and power of God on the cross. This is the wisdom that we can use as our backdrop for this New Year. We are an imperfect church made up of imperfect people. God is giving us this opportunity to witness grace anew as we turn the calendar over to this New Year.

God of our yesterday, today and tomorrow, we pause in this time of worship to recognize you in our midst. You got us ready for this moment today, this moment where we quiet our souls long enough to hear you. Help us to begin this journey of faith anew – changed by grace, seeking to understand worthiness and embracing our imperfections. May our hearts and minds be opened so that we are vulnerable to your spirit's movement. May we know courage, compassion and connection as gifts of our imperfections. With Jesus we pray. Amen.

PRAYER REQUESTS

PRAYER SONG *Come to the Table of Grace* Deb Verdegan, Piano

PASTORAL PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

ALL: 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.

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

L: Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge — God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord, Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

MESSAGE *An Invitation to Imperfection* Rev. Cathy Christman

MINISTRY MOMENT: *Sacrament of Communion*
(see attached page)

REFLECTION VIDEO

*BENEDICTION

Owning up to our imperfections will be hard. It is harder to pretend like they don't exist. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky, but not nearly as heartbreaking as giving up on love, belonging and joy. As we journey with our imperfections, may we discover the beauty of God's indescribable grace in our lives.

***HYMN** *Grace Alone* F2162
Deb Verdegan, Piano

***POSTLUDE** *Blessed Assurance* Deb Verdegan, Piano

- Please stand during these sections of the service.

THANK YOU TO LITURGIST/READER, JUDY ATKINSON,
CHOIR/BELLS, & OUR AUDIO/VISUAL STAFF FOR
THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE SERVICE TODAY.

CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Cathy Christman

Nick Brantmeyer, Audio & Visual

Barry Verdegan, Projection

Deb Verdegan, Music Director

Pam Mickelson, Administrative Assistant

Jasmine Brantmeyer, Custodian



STOUGHTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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OFFICE HOURS: M - TH: 9AM - 1PM

COMMUNION LITURGY

Pastor: In communion, the breaking of the bread and the giving of the cup, we join with a long tradition of Christ followers who believe in this as a means of grace. The church is full of sinners. On this much pretty much everyone can agree. And, with this truth, we stand in need of grace each and every day of our lives.

One of the most popular and rich images of the church is that of the body of Christ. The church is a visible means of an invisible grace. The breaking of the bread is a symbolic adaptation of those words – a visible and outward sign of an invisible and spiritual grace. In the breaking, we find our unity as the body of Christ. In the Gospel of Luke (chapter 23) we learn that Jesus was hung upon the cross not alone but with two criminals flanking him: one on his right, the other on his left. Reviled and exhausted, Jesus spent the last moments of his life between two justly imperfect people. One rebukes and turns away from the so-called Messiah, while the other beseeches and turns toward him. In the middle of these two fundamental orientations hangs the body of Christ.

With this image of brokenness and imperfection, we invite all to this table. The open invitation is meant to extend the grace that Christ imparts to all beyond these walls. In the sense of unity, we recognize, too, that not all feel worthy of this. The invitation is to participate with the bread and cup and also to receive a blessing as a valued and loved member of this body of Christ. The invitation is in anticipation of God calling us into a deeper relationship with God through Jesus here at church and in our homes.

P: The home of God is among the imperfect mortals.

C: We are glad God is here.

P: Let us give God thanks and praise.

C: We are thankful for our lives, and praise God for blessings toward us.

P: We are grateful to you, O God, Creator of the new heaven and new earth, and of gifts yet to come, more than we can even imagine.

C: You, O God, make all things new.

P: You dwell among us and call us to be your people. You dry the tears from our eyes. You take away the power of death. You bring us through mourning and crying and pain to be with you.

C: You, O God, make all things new.

P: In a surprising gesture, you came in human form to dwell among us. Through Jesus Christ, you turned the world upside down- healing our diseases, teaching us new ways of thinking, living with us into new ways of community, overcoming sin and death to rise again in newness of life. We remember his life, death and resurrection with thanksgiving.

C: You, O God, make all things new.

P: Come now, with your Holy Spirit, and make us anew. Release us from our old burdens of hate and sorrow. Free us from our doubts and fears. Transform us into your people, full of love and joy, ready to do justice and dwell with you.

C: You, O God, make all things new.

P: By your Spirit, bless these elements and use them in your transformation of us, that Christ may indeed dwell in us and we in You, Great God, Three-in-One.

C: Amen.

PREPARATION FOR AT-HOME COMMUNION