

(W)Here We Are To Worship

Worship and Liturgy are words we throw around a lot, and most of us have some specific images and understandings that go along with them. Here are the actual word origins :

worship :: from the Old English *weorthscipe* : 'worthiness, acknowledgment of worth'

The modern use essentially refers to the feelings we have, of reverence and adoration (usually for a deity, but let's be honest, we have hero worship, idol worship, and other kinds too). **Worship as an action is the ritual and practice that shows what we value.** *To what are we ascribing worth? What are we saying is worth our worship?*

liturgy :: from the Greek *lêitos* 'public' + *-ergos* 'working' came *leitourgos* 'minister', and then came *leitourgia* 'public service, worship'

When we refer to 'the liturgy' now, we mean a usually written form or formula according to which religious (especially Christian) worship happens: what is read, said, sung, heard.

So in the ACT of WORSHIP, we show *what is important and worthy of praise*.
And in our USE of LITURGY, we are literally focused on *the work of the people*.

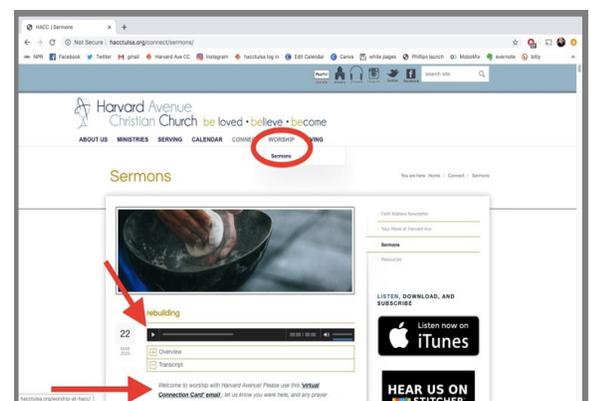
Worship and liturgy are different right now than we are used to. It's not the place where we usually sit. We are arranging the parts in different ways. We are receiving the sights and sounds by new means. We are bringing our offerings by mail and online giving.

And yet, we are still saying what is important, what is worthy of praise. **God is still God, and we are still God's people. We are still the church, the body of Christ. That body isn't broken – it has GROWN.** We are reaching further than ever because we have to stretch past our rows of chairs, past our doorways, into the streets and the neighborhoods and the homes where you are finding us, and where God is finding you. The work of the people has never been more important.

Find us on Sunday mornings (or evenings! Or whenever!) online at the Sermons page (under the Worship tab). Send a Connection Card email. Share a prayer concern. Click play. Listen. Read. Imagine. See.

And THEN the work of the people actually begins. What is different because you worshiped? Who will you tell? How will you pray? Where can you show compassion? What can you do, even in this strange and uncertain time, to remain sure and confident in The One Whose Love We Claim and Proclaim? Where are we to worship? HERE. We are to worship.

Courtney Richards
Connections Pastor



New Ways



This was not our plan, the financial struggle was not anticipated, the hours upon hours spent inside of our home and on the land we call 'ours' was not what we wished for, but my family has been grateful for this gift of opportunity. We have the opportunity to spend more quality time with each other.

I'm living my best life, as an introverted extrovert, sleeping until my body says it's time to wake up, getting to drink my morning coffee for an hour before everyone else wakes up, and enjoying everyone's posts on social media while still interacting with friends and family via Zoom and Face-Time. We have a new rule that if the sun is out, we are out. We turn on the attic fan every chance we get and we make time for family fitness by

walking around the park in our neighborhood, jumping on the trampoline, and swinging kettlebells. We even have had the opportunity to prove to Ezra that he doesn't actually want to be homeschooled!

We miss our friends, we lost out on time with my parents as they were coming to visit for spring break, we miss work, and we even miss school. But as we are praying for a calm to the storm, health, and healing, **we are enjoying this opportunity to love on each other in completely new and unique ways.**

*Ashley Pease
Childrens Music Director*

Here are links to my current favorite songs that I listen to during this time...

"Praise Before My Breakthrough" by Bryan and Katie Torwalt

"Lightbulbs" by Something in the Wheel

"When the Well Runs Dry" by Liv Douglas and John Lucas

"Missing Peace" by JJ Heller

"Still" by Amanda Lindsey Cook

Spring Cleaning

I'm taking advantage of these self-quarantine days to do some Spring Cleaning. Closets are my favorite! Some of these closets haven't been cleaned out and organized for years. When I took a load to Goodwill on Sunday afternoon, I thought I'd be the only one dropping off. It seems that I'm not alone. The Goodwill drop-off was opened and manned, and others were leaving their closet discards as well.

I really think **we can all take advantage of these days** (during Lent) to cleanse ourselves in so many ways. It's an opportunity to reboot, declutter and organize our souls, and hearts, and homes and lives. I'm feeling cleansed already!

*Kelly Ford
Traditional Music Director*

Meanwhile...

A church member said, “normal does not live here anymore.”

We understand, don’t we?

Everything for everyone has been completely turned upside down. Moving to Tulsa in the middle of a pandemic was not a part of our plans. I have washed my hands so many times they are chapped and bleeding.

For some of us, it’s an inconvenience.

- Running out of toilet paper.
- Canceling our spring break.
- Working remotely from home.
- Bored kids who are driving us crazy.
- Starbucks is closed.

For others, it is life and death.

- Young people discovering the virus does not care how old we are.
- People who need surgery to remove cancer being told they must wait.
- Single moms who wait tables struggling to put food on their own.
- A widow who can’t hold a funeral for her husband of 50 years.
- Medical professionals who expose themselves every day to the virus.
- Doctors making decisions about who gets a respirator and who does not.

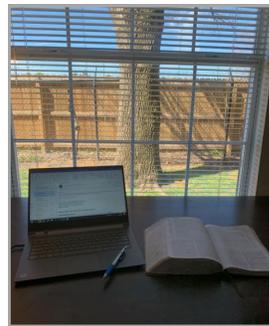
Will we worship together on Easter Sunday? It would be a great day to reopen the doors of the church! But honestly not meeting for worship is more of an inconvenience than life or death at this moment.

Our church will weather this storm. I’m certain God will use this to grow our church in ways that we cannot begin to imagine. God will teach us new ways to be church and position us to make an even greater impact on our community.

Consider that this is an amazing time to experience what has always been true: the church isn’t a building, but people called into community with God. Gathered or scattered, we are still the church.

For now, what should we do to make the most of this pause.

- Take a rigorous spiritual inventory of your life with God.
- Ask God to grow your empathy for those who are most vulnerable.
- Pray for our medical staff who are in the front lines of this battle.
- Establish a new spiritual practice to become more intimate with God.
- Find a creative way to reach out to an older person who may be alone.



Meanwhile, I’m praying for you and your family. I’m asking God to prepare me for this next season in my life as a pastor ... asking God to use this pause to shape me and strengthen me. I’m leaning on John 14:27: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

God is bigger than this pandemic. Hope is more viral than the coronavirus. We are not in this by ourselves!

With much love,
David

David Emery
Lead Pastor



I can hardly wait for when we can throw open the doors of the church, when we can replace an elbow bump with a hug, and when we can share a meal.

Until then, you can reach me by email at david@hacctulsa.org, or by my cell phone 502-418-8672. I’d love to hear from you.

Our Path Right Now

What a beautiful day it's been! I've asked a friend to text me each time she goes outside for a walk to encourage me to do the same. I found that last week, I hunkered down and didn't do much outside at all, and watched way too much news. This week, as I work more from my home office, I have made some changes to my daily routine based on an astronaut who spent a year in space. My strategy is to include the following activities in each day: outside time, make room for hobbies, keep a journal, connect electronically with family & friends, listen to experts on daily living choices, and utilize my favorite spiritual practice of praying with labyrinths.



Today my daughter Zoey and I walked the labyrinth at St. John's Episcopal Church, just east of Lewis and 41st. It was bright and sunny, with birds singing and wind whispering through the trees. As I walked to the center, I discarded all the distracting thoughts and focused on the natural world I could see and hear. Near the center, Zoey and I were on a parallel path but she was just beginning and I was arriving at the center. **How like our life path it was, she just beginning her adult life and I in my middling years, but God with us both.** By the time I arrived at the center, my breaths were deep and slow. I gave all of my praise and concerns to God and basked in the sunshine for a few minutes. As I walked back out towards the entrance and back into the world, some leaves skittered across my path. Like those leaves passing my path, this phase of global health concern will pass. Not without loss, and pain, but nevertheless, it will pass with something beautiful to follow. There will be a joyous time when we are back together celebrating at HACC, and I cherish that vision! Wishing you health and safety,

*Darlene Martinez
Childrens Pastor*

(Here's the article Darlene referred to, from astronaut Cmdr. Scott Kelly:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/21/opinion/scott-kelly-coronavirus-isolation.html>)

The Season of Home

So much of our lives seem to be seasonal, and I'm not just lamenting that I can't buy pool noodles year round at Wal-Mart, but in my old age I'm beginning to realize just how right the wisdom teacher in Ecclesiastes was, there is truly a season for everything under the sun. I've been doing youth ministry at HACC for almost 15 years now and up until this point I thought I had seen all the seasons: the excitement of back to school, the joy of lock-ins and retreats in the fall, skiing over winter break, spring break mission trips and preparing the soil for our summer adventures. We also have graduation season and the acknowledgement that these youth really are about to graduate and move on, and finally the craziness of summer, then we repeat the process.

But the season of staying at home is a new one. Not being able to spend time with our youth or be in the sacred walls of HACC, of giving people hugs when I see them, of finding empty shelves in my local stores is a new one.

For team Stubblefield, these days have looked very different. The Dr. works from home, which means Jess' work schedule and time in the office hasn't changed much at all, but with both schools out for Liam and Emma, her home office has been a bit more chaotic than usual. But my view of this has been largely shaped through the eyes of Liam, who wakes every day and asks if he gets to go to school. When we tell him "No", there is typically a few seconds of disappointment, followed by a slow growing smile and the realization that we get to play today. I know this situation is less than ideal, there is enough fear and uncertainty to strip the joy from our lives, but in the midst of all of this remember, "you get to play today." **Perhaps not in the way you had anticipated, but you get to play.**

I read this quote to our students before we left on our Spring Break Plan B, and I think it's even more fitting today: "The maxim of illusory religion runs: Fear not; trust in God and he will see that none of the things you fear will happen to you; that of real religion, on the contrary, is Fear not; the things that you are afraid of are quite likely to happen to you, but they are nothing to be afraid of." (*Persons in Relation*, by John Macmurray)

*Colt Stubblefield
Youth Director*

Quarantine as Wilderness Time

Who could have imagined that we would hear the word 'quarantine' used so often in our lifetimes? I was surprised to learn that the word was derived from the Latin—and later Italian—words that mean 'forty,' in reference to a period of 40 days. The irony of that is not lost on me, given that the church finds itself smack-dab in the middle of the liturgical season of Lent; a season derived from the 40 days that Jesus spent in fasting in the wilderness before he began his ministry. For me, I am finding benefit in thinking about this time of quarantine as wilderness time.

There is nothing normal about being in the midst of wilderness (and how could it be?); wilderness is a departure from the spaces where normal daily routines take shape. And while wilderness is an unsettling place, filled with potential threats, temptations, and a great deal of unknowns, it also remains one of the best places to listen for God's call in our lives. **Wilderness spaces present us with the opportunity to lean the weight of our living on God's care and guidance.** And just like Jesus emerging from the wilderness with a strong sense of call for his ministry, I believe we are presented the same opportunity during this season of quarantine.

At this point, I have invited quarantine to be a wilderness time; a departure from normal routines and practices. This has been both anxiety-producing and a surprisingly refreshing perspective. I find myself asking questions about my life and the way I am living it which for some time have taken a backseat to the rationale of "because that's the way I've always done it." And most importantly, I have found myself having more conversation with God, as I have taken up the audacious practice of mid-morning walks.

When quarantine time becomes wilderness time, there is always the possibility that we will emerge with a better sense of God's presence in our lives and a stronger sense of where we are called to ministry. As we move deeper into the season of lent, and a season of quarantine, this will be my prayer.

*Kevin Howe
Community Pastor*

COVID Yoga

We asked our Yoga instructor, Harvard Ave member Susan Hollingsworth, and our Fitness for Life trainer, Harvard Ave member Becky Young, to offer some suggestions of how we can stay healthy, strong, and balanced while spending so much time at home. We'll share their practices and suggestions with you in our e-news each week, and post them to our website.

To start, here is one simple breathing exercise, from Susan :

We're all searching for ways to remain active while we're at home. We're hoping to find exercises, both mental and physical, that will keep us engaged and in shape. We're also looking for ways to calm our spirits and relieve our stress. Here are a few simple breathing exercises, taken from yoga practice, that might help. All exercises enhance lung capacity, strengthen the respiratory organs and muscles and improve mindfulness.

DEEP BREATHING

Sitting on the edge of a chair, place both feet on the floor, ankles directly under knees. (This can also be done sitting on the floor with crossed legs —criss-cross applesauce, tailor fashion —whatever you choose to call it.) A couple of stacked books can be placed under the feet if the feet don't reach the floor. Sitting up straight, lengthening the spine, there should be a slight arch in the low back and the back of the head should be directly above the tailbone. Rest hands in lap and close eyes. Then begin to breathe deeply, filling the lower part of the lungs with air. With every inhalation the belly should rise, and with every exhalation the belly should fall. Then, counting silently, inhale for the count of four and then exhale for the count of four. After several breaths, inhale for the count of four but exhale for the count of six. After several more breaths inhale for the count of four and exhale for the count of eight. Continue, thinking only of the breath until a sense of calm and relaxation is felt.

Focus only on breathing while doing these exercises, being aware of breath, the breath of life.

At the end of the practice you are welcome to use my new mantra for this unusual time (taken from a teacup):

It's a new day. I am alive. I am loved. I am thankful. Namaste!

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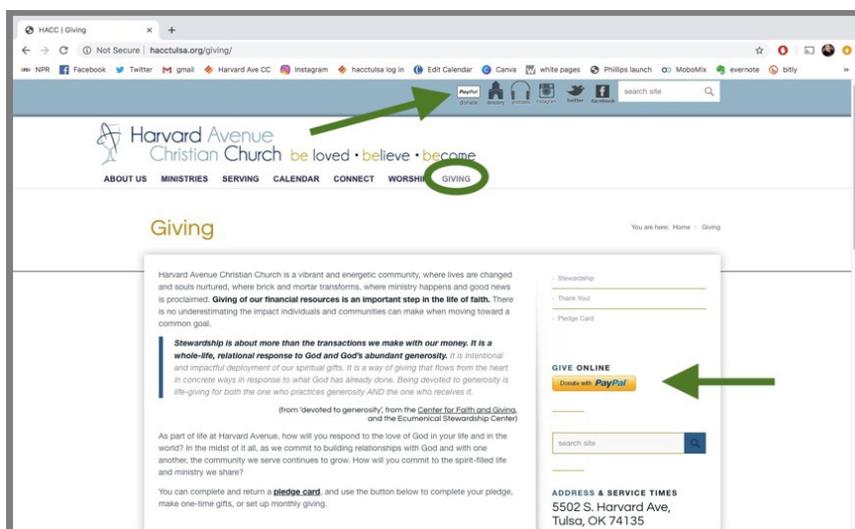
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Giving

Now on Sunday mornings, or anytime, you can use the **Give Online** button on our website's Giving page. This will direct you to a secure PayPal site, where you can complete your pledge, make one-time gifts, or set up monthly giving.

We will still be receiving mail, so you can always share offerings and be in touch that way as well.



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