

November 15, 2020
Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
A Time of Richness

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Welcome to all guests, first-time visitors, and the Reverend Nora Driver-Foust, Associate Conference Minister for Congregational and Ministerial Excellence of the Penn Central Conference of the United Church of Christ.

PRELUDE *The Grace of God is Upon Us* (Little)

GREETING

CALL TO WORSHIP¹

Pastor: There is a richness here – a richness that greets and grows and holds and challenges and keeps. There is a richness here – a richness that surrounds and brings and delivers and gives. The richness holds us in our weakness, fills us in our hunger. So here, richly blessed, we have come, and we have been found. May this time together inspire us in richness and grace.

INVITATION & PRAYER OF CONFESSION²

Pastor: And, speaking of grace...God's grace is wider than the whole of the earth; God's mercy is deeper than the depths of the sea. Trusting in the richness of God's grace, let us make our confession, before God and each other, first in silent prayer...

Moment of silence to offer our personal prayers of confession

Pastor: Please join me now, as we confess in one voice, using the printed prayer...
All people: *Holy God, we open our hearts to you this day and offer the truth of our lives: the fear that stifles us, the prejudice that blinds us, the ignorance that hobbles us, and the doubt that plagues us. Help us, we pray, that we will find courage in unlikely places, see the world with new and gracious eyes, move to those places where love is needed, and have faith that you are with us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

¹ Rev. Kajj S. Douša is the Senior Minister of Park Avenue Christian Church in New York City and is a writer and contributor to Worship Ways, a worship resource for the United Church of Christ. These words, written by Douša, come from "The Time of Richness: Service Prayers for the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost." < https://www.ucc.org/pentecost_24_november_15 > 27 Oct 2020

² Neel, Beth Merrill. This morning's liturgy of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness are adapted from Beth Merrill Neel's blog titled, "Hold Fast to What is Good." < <https://holdfasttowhatisgood.com/liturgy/prayer-of-confession/> > 27 Oct 2020

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Pastor: Our God is rich and grace and mercy! This is Good News: we are forgiven!
We are set free to go out into the world to be the loving, gracious, hopeful
people of God.

All people: Alleluia! Amen!

SPECIAL MUSIC

Faye Schaeffer

HEBREW READING – Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

Be silent before the Lord God!

For the day of the Lord is at hand.

The Lord has prepared a sacrifice,
he has consecrated his guests.

At that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the people
who rest complacently on their dregs,
those who say in their hearts,
“The Lord will not do good,
nor will he do harm.”

Their wealth shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.

Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine from them.

EPISTLE READING – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

GOSPEL READING – Matthew 25:14-30

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

“After a long time, the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

“The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned, I would have received it back with interest.

“So, take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

SERMON & PASTORAL PRAYER

Rev. Nora Foust

THE LORD’S PRAYER

All people: 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING INVITATION

Liturgist: Children of the light – richness and blessings are ours.
Now, the time is ours – isn't it exciting????

Met by God in the holiness of worship, inspired by God's word, God's gifts, God's love, and encouraged by the presence and commitment of everyone else around us – let's do something!

Let's try something new!
We've given before, we've given to the church.
Let's keep giving.
But let's give something NEW!

Maybe it means that we add a few dollars to our usual pledge.
Maybe it means that we add a pledge of time that we haven't included before.
Maybe it means that we make a commitment of giving for the first time ever.

Now is the time to do something new in gratitude for God's abundant gifts to us. Let us take a full moment in silent reflection to consider what new act of giving we will share.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Liturgist: Let us now dedicate ourselves, our gifts, and new offering to the Lord's service.

All people: O God, we have come, and WHAT A DELIGHT it has been!!! We have come before you with gifts –gifts of ourselves, gifts of risk, gifts of newness, gifts of trust. We thank you for the chance to give and pray that we and all whom our gifts bless will never be the same. Through our greatest gift, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

HYMN *Siyahamba (We are Marching in the Light of God)*³

Please use your instruments, clap, dance, and/or move freely to this upbeat “marching” song.
We will sing it through 2 times, in English only.

This song comes from the South African Zulu tradition. The title *Siyahamba* (pronounced: See-ya-humm-ba) means “we are marching” or “we are walking.” Sources indicate it was a protest song in South Africa and was sung by those protesting apartheid. The song was introduced to the English-speaking world by Anders Nyber, a Swedish composer and conductor. Nyber tape-recorded and then wrote down the words after hearing some young girls singing it in a school in the South African village of Ozwathini, near the southern borders of Zululand. Today, the song is often sung as a benediction or a “going out song.”

³ Boris Gorelik wrote an article on the history of this popular hymn/worship song. It was titled: “Siyahamba’: a well-known South African song with a little-known past” and was published in the April 26, 2015 edition of Rapport.
<https://www.academia.edu/30914382/Siyahamba_a_well_known_South_African_song_with_a_little_known_past>

BENEDICTION⁴

Pastor: Go now as children of the light:

Congregation: We are ready to serve!

We are eager to give!

We are delighted to love!

Pastor: May God's blessing:

Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,

keep, lead, mold and make you,

now and forever.

All people: Amen.

POSTLUDE

The Light of the World is Jesus (Watson)

⁴ Rev. Kajj S. Douša. See footnote #1.

306 We Are Marching in the Light of the Lord

In a moderate tempo (♩ = ca. 92)

We are march - ing in the
Zulu: See yah hahm buh koo kah

light of the Lord, we are march-ing in the light of the Lord. We are
nigh nee kwen kohs. See yah hahm buh koo kah nigh nee kwen kohs. See yah

march - ing in the light of the Lord, we are
hahm bah koo kah nigh nee kwen kohs. See yah

march - ing in the light of the Lord.
hahm buh koo kah nigh nee kwen kohs.

WORDS and MUSIC: Zulu Traditional Song
 Arranged by Hal H. Hopson
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(Continued on Next Page)

march - ing,

mf We are march - ing, march - ing we are

Oh,

march - ing march - ing, we are march - ing in the light of the Lord,

f march - ing,

of the Lord. We are march - ing, march - ing, we are

Oh,

march - ing march - ing we are march - ing in the light of the Lord.