

whoever drinks of the water
I will give him will NEVER thirst again

John 4:14

LIVING
WATER

March 15, 2020

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

*Call to Worship

L: The woman of Samaria came to the well feeling spiritually empty.

P: We sometimes feel that way, too.

L: Jesus offered her water, the water of life.

P: We seek that water, too.

L: There are many ways we can find the water Jesus offers us to fill our hearts again. Worship is one of them because we gather in the name of Jesus who seeks us out and loves us.

P: We give thanks for this wonderful gift! Let us worship in the name of Jesus!

*Hymn "God Will Take Care of You," vs. 1,3,4 UMH #130

Children's Moment

Ministry of Music

Prayer (unison)

God of us all, you know that there are times when we wonder where to turn or how to manage what life has handed us. Help us to remember the Samaritan woman at the well, who discovered that Jesus helped to refill her cup with the water of salvation. He restored her hope and filled her heart with joy. May we hold onto that promise for ourselves, our families, friends, and our church family. Thank you for your guidance and love. Amen.

Sung Response "Lead Me, Lord" UMH #473

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word John 4:5-42

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message "Living Water" Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

*Hymn "Fill My Cup, Lord" Insert

We Respond to God's Word

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

Our Father, who are 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.

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

*Doxology (Please join in singing the following) UMH #87

This gift we now bring, this present, this token, these words can convey it, the joy of this day! When grateful we come, remembering rejoicing, this song we now offer in honor and praise.

*Prayer of Dedication (unison)

Generous God, you have given us so much. Accept these gifts that we offer from the gratitude of our hearts, and make them be help and hope for others. Amen.

We Go Forth to Serve

*Hymn "Open My Eyes, That I May See" UMH #454

*Choral Benediction (Congregation encircles the Sanctuary)

May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek his face and his grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.

*Pastor's Charge

Postlude

**Please stand as you are comfortable*

TFWS = The Faith We Sing UMH = United Methodist Hymnal

Large print bulletins are available from the greeters



UPCOMING EVENTS

3/15 - United Methodist Committee on Relief will be accepting donations next Sunday, 3/22. This gift supports UMCOR's administrative work so that all designated gifts will go to the various projects UMCOR supports. There will be donation envelopes in next weeks bulletin.

3/17 - Church Council, meets at 6:00 pm at the church. All are welcome.

3/22 - Open Spirit Task Force meeting in Dover has been cancelled.

3/26 - Nurture Task Force meeting, 11:00 am at the church.



THINGS TO KNOW

Altar Flowers - Are in honor of Church Council who work hard on behalf of our Church.

Kids First - Last month, Kids First was introduced. Increased emergency placements and the willingness of FUMC to meet this challenge head on represents the support in making a difference in our community.

This month, the need is for new, neutral color twin bed sheet sets and/or new twin blankets. Please drop off donations in the basket in the office. A complete list of needed items includes:

Deodorant	Dry Shampoo	Toothbrush & Toothpaste
Hairbrush	Hand Towels	Notebook & Pen
Baby Wipes	Chapstick	Small First Aid Kits

For monetary donations, please make check out to FUMC, with Kids First in the memo section. Please direct questions to any church council member.



PRAYER LIST

Gayle Gardei
Sillanpaa Family
Jim Slater
Sue Ellery
Bobbie Noble
Alvord Family

Joe, PennySue's nephew
Judy Doyon
Rev. Charles Hartman
Emily - for the Fernandez Family
Our Denomination
Our Church Family

All those living in assisted living, nursing care or homebound

2020 Flower chart - is posted in the Narthex. Bring your own arrangement or have the church order them at a cost of \$25. This is a great way to honor, remember, thank or let someone know they are appreciated.



WORSHIP TEAM

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Pastor's Assistant - David Richards – Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek

Liturgist - John VanReenen – Acolyte - Christine Williams

Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek – Worship Service Tech - Steve Scott

Greeters - Sue Lange & Marilyn Stebbins

Ushers - Jan & Al Cansdale

Sunday School - Sue & Dave Richards

Photographer - Dave Atkinson

FILL MY CUP LORD

Come and quench this thirsting of my soul

Fill My Cup, Lord Hymn #3093

Like the woman at the well, I was seeking for things that could not satisfy; and then I heard my Savior speaking: "Draw from my well that never shall run dry."

Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord! Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; bread of heaven, feed me til I want no more - fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!

There are millions in this world who are craving the pleasure earthly things afford; but none can match the wondrous treasure that I find in Jesus Christ, my Lord.

Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord! Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; bread of heaven, feed me til I want no more - fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!

So, my neighbor, if the things this world gave you leave hungers that won't pass away, my blessed Lord will come and save you, if you kneel to him and humbly pray:

Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord! Come and quench this thirsting of my soul; bread of heaven, feed me til I want no more - fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!

CORONAVIRUS

1. Please do not panic
2. Wash hands often
3. Cough into your elbow
4. Practice social distancing from others
5. Wearing masks are not effective
6. Do an elbow bump instead of handshake
7. Listen for updates on local and national news
8. Suggested Rules for gatherings - no touching, stay home if feeling sick. If you live with someone who is sick, stay home, if you have a pre-existing condition (congestive heart failure, COPD, diabetes, cancer, compromised immune system) be more pro-active. If you have a pre-existing condition it is suggested that you stay away from large gatherings. Wash hands often
9. Some symptoms are fever, coughing, shortness of breath are the most common. Some of the not so common symptoms are abdominal symptoms (cramping, diarrhea). Consult a doctor if you have symptoms
10. If you need something call someone



FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



New England Annual Conference Tri-State District
The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop
The Rev. Taesung Kang, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801
Office Phone 603-436-6038 office@fumcportsmouth.net
Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm
[call to ensure availability]
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at www.fumcportsmouth.com

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“Living Water” - 3/15/20
First UMC - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: John 4:5-42

THEME: Jesus offers everyone new life.

A mother came to President Abraham Lincoln asking for him to pardon her son who was under a death sentence. As a result of her pleading, Lincoln issued a pardon. When she was finished, she passed through a corridor and exclaimed to Thaddeus Stevens, who was with her, “I knew it was a lie!” Stevens asked, “What do you mean?” She answered sharply, “Why, they told me that he was an ugly-looking man, but he is the handsomest man I ever saw in my life.” (Illustrations Unlimited, p. 410, #4). This mother saw beyond the outward appearances and experienced the compassion and inner character of President Lincoln.

That’s what Jesus did with the Samaritan woman at the well. This woman had at least three strikes against her: she was a Samaritan, part of a group of people who had a long history of antagonism and hatred with the Judean Jews which is what Jesus was. Years earlier, when the people of Judah were taken into exile, there was a small faction of them who stayed in Samaria, and they intermarried with non-Jews, so they were despised by the Judean Jews who considered them tainted and traitors to the race. Most Jews from Jerusalem avoided going through Samaria because of their aversion to Samaritans.

The second strike against this Samaritan was that she was a woman, and any self-respecting male in Jesus’ society knew that it was improper to speak with a woman in public, especially one who was a stranger to him and with questionable morals. In general women were not allowed to speak to or carry on a conversation with a man, unless, of course, he was her husband, father, or brother, and that took place in private. For Jesus to speak directly to her and to ask a favor of her was shocking, and the disciples’ reaction to seeing him in conversation with her reflected this. Jesus crossed boundaries, opened doors, and invited everyone to be part of his good news.

Thirdly, this woman was an outcast among her own people. We learn in the course of this conversation between Jesus and the woman that she has had five husbands, and the one she was with was not her husband. It would be easy to make the assumption that she was a prostitute or at least a rather “loose” woman, but before we jump into judgment against her, we need to think about other possibilities. It is possible that she had buried five husbands, and the man she was with at that time was someone who was providing her with a home. It could be that she had been abandoned by her husbands which would have constituted a divorce on their part. Women didn’t have a say about whether or not their husband would leave. If she was unable, for example, to have children, the man could leave her because he would not be able to produce heirs with her.

We really don’t know what her circumstances were, but the people of the town apparently made a lot of assumptions, just as we would, and she was forced to go to the well to draw water in the most oppressive heat of the day - at noon. Most of the women would have gone early in the morning or later in the evening, but this woman was apparently not welcome at the well. She was an outcast among outcasts, and when she left for the well that day, she would not have expected to see anyone there. One commentator imagined her reaction this way:

“Who is that sitting at the well? No one I’ve ever seen before. The whole point of coming here at noon in this ungodly heat is to avoid meeting anyone else. Why does he have to be here? At least he’s no one I know. He is no one who knows my secrets. Maybe he’ll go away if I wait long enough. But I can’t stand out here in the glare and heat a moment longer, and it doesn’t look like he’s going anywhere anytime soon.” (Alyce McKenzie, Lectionary Reflections, found at Text This Week at the Gospel commentary section on line.)

Jesus did not go away, and the Samaritan woman had a life changing conversation with him. Jesus apparently had deliberately stopped there to interact with her. This story contrasts last week’s story about Nicodemus. Nicodemus came by night to see Jesus, and he didn’t comprehend what Jesus

was telling him. He just didn't understand. He was Jewish, a leader in the temple, well educated in the Torah (or the Hebrew Scriptures), and yet, it seems as though he never figured things out. However, here we have a woman, a Samaritan, probably with no formal education, not even close to being considered an upstanding citizen in her town, and she appears in the middle of the day - in daylight. The contrast between the two is striking, and it seems to be a deliberate point being made by the writer of the Gospel of John. The point is to show that Jesus turns everything around, pushes the boundaries of God's kingdom away in order to include even the lowliest of the lowly, and demonstrates that God's love is for everyone.

Jesus sees what is inside the person, looking past the outward appearances. Like the widow who saw Lincoln as handsome, Jesus sees this woman as God's child and offers her life. At first the conversation about "living water" is just polite courtesy. The woman took it literally, wondering where Jesus' bucket for collecting water was, but as the conversation continued, she began to understand that the "living water" was the water of life in God's love, acceptance, and grace. She didn't fit the idea of who was "worthy" to receive God's love and grace, but Jesus knew that the water he had to offer was for everyone - no one was excluded from the living water of God. This story isn't about sin and immorality; it is about identity, respect, dignity, and honoring the other. Jesus demonstrated that throughout his ministry by honoring and valuing everyone, and he detested it when others didn't do the same.

We jump to conclusions so often. There is a story about a Salvation Army officer named Shaw who went to India to be a medical missionary in a leper colony. Three men were brought to him who had chains and fetters binding their hands and feet, cutting into their diseased flesh. Captain Shaw turned to the guard who was with them and said, "Please unfasten the chains." "It isn't safe," the guard argued, "these men are dangerous criminals as well as lepers!" "I'll be responsible for them. They are suffering enough," Captain Shaw answered, as he put out his hand and took the keys, then knelt and tenderly removed the shackles and treated their bleeding ankles and wrists.

About two weeks later, Captain Shaw had his first misgivings about freeing these criminals; he had to make an overnight trip and dreaded leaving his wife and child alone. His wife insisted that she wasn't afraid with God being there. The next morning when she went to the front door, she was startled to see the three criminals lying on her steps. One explained, "We know the doctor goes. We stay here all night so no harm comes to you." That's how these dangerous men responded to an act of love and kindness. Christ came to set fettered people free. (Illustrations Unlimited, pp. 118-119, #21).

Jesus opened the doors of the religious teachings of the day to include those who were outcast, rejected, and marginalized. Jesus accepted the woman at the well, and she in turn received the living water of life in Christ. She may not have fully understood what Jesus was telling her, but she received it anyway. Where in our own lives have we longed to quench our thirst? What is the thirst all around us? How do we try to satisfy that thirst? For some it is accumulation of things: money, possessions. For some it is addictions of various kinds: gambling, drugs, sex, food. For still others, it is work, partying, or any number of other ways to try to fill that empty longing that they can't ever seem to fill.

The Samaritan woman was able to feel accepted and loved, and it set her free. But she didn't just take it in and keep it. She left her water jug behind - like a symbol of leaving her past behind - and ran to the village to tell everyone. They all came to meet Jesus, and they too believed. She was an evangelist as she witnessed to her experience of Jesus. I know evangelism scares a lot of people. Witnessing to our faith can be intimidating, and we can experience rejection. But there are ways we can share our faith that doesn't have to be an "in your face" way. I recently read about a little boy who came home after his first day in Sunday school. His mother asked, "Who was your teacher?" He answered, "I don't remember her name, but she must have been Jesus' grandmother because she didn't talk about anyone else." (Illustrations Unlimited, p. 490, #1).

We are called to not only receive the living water, but to share it with others. When I was in college, there was a young man who was an acquaintance of one of my friends. I had never met him before,

but he was on the defensive as soon as we sat down to have lunch together. He told me that he was an atheist, and he wouldn't believe anything I said to him about God. "Okay." I answered and left it at that. He stared at me with a little smirk on his face and asked, "So you aren't going to try to convince me differently?" "No." I said. "You have obviously made up your mind, so there isn't any point in trying to convince you." I was VERY young when I said those things, but I would say it that way today if a similar situation happened. People who don't want to hear the good news won't hear it no matter how hard we try to share it. In fact, Jesus told his disciples as they went out two by two to shake the dust off their feet at the towns who rejected them. If people don't want to receive living water, then we leave it to God's grace to work on them and move on.

So what CAN we do? I think the first thing we need to remember is that we only plant the seeds, and God does the watering, nurturing and growth. In fact, God has probably already been at work in someone who is longing to fill that empty place inside, and we are the means by which God begins to work in them. Albert Schweitzer once wrote: "We see no power in a drop of water. But let it get into a crack in the rock and be turned to ice, and it splits the rock; turned to steam, it drives the pistons of the most powerful engines." (from Lindy Black's commentary on line at Text This Week for this Sunday's gospel lesson). We are the drop of water that opens the crack and then God enters to fill the rest.

We can trust God to work through our tiniest drops. When we experience the way God works in our lives and how we are transformed, we become witnesses in the way we live our lives. I have my own ideas about how that would look, and it is different for each one of us and for each church, according to the gifts we have been given. The woman at the well discovered that she had worth in spite of her societies' condemnations. She discovered the blessing of Jesus' acceptance and love in her life, and she didn't stay quiet about it, but she was so excited that she forgot the shunning she had experienced from her community and ran to tell them all! She shared that love of God with others, putting aside her own fears and moving past being an outcast because of what she had learned from Jesus.

This week, I saw a blessing on the church's Facebook page, and I want to share it with you:

A Blessing:

The world now is too dangerous and too beautiful for anything but love.

May your eyes be so blessed you see God in everyone.

Your ears, so you hear the cry of the poor.

May your hands be so blessed that everything you touch is a sacrament.

Your lips, so you speak nothing but the truth in love.

May your feet be so blessed you run to those who need you.

And may your heart be so opened, so set on fire, that your love, your love, changes everything.

(posted by Nancy Richards and copied from a Black Rock Prayer Book)

Jesus offers living water - the water of God's Spirit that fills us and fulfills us. It's a constant process of refilling through prayer, reading scripture, worship, interacting with our companions on the journey, and reaching out to share that living water with others. This week, let us go out and be that drop of water, the living water as the Body of Christ in the world. May we witness to others in the way we live our lives because we, too have experienced the living water in Christ.

Let us pray:

Gracious, accepting, and loving God, we give you thanks that you receive us just as we are and then help us to grow in your love and to share that love with others. Amen.