**08.04.24 ~ Pentecost 11**

**“What Is Taizé?”**

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Please pray with me:**

Dear Lord, our creator, guide, healer, provider, and reconciler, we thank you for this morning’s study and worship so far. Still our hearts and minds from any anxiety we may be experiencing. Let us find sacred rest this morning in the prayers, the gentle singing, the silence, and communion together. We thank you, Lord, for this brief spiritual retreat and respite to renew us and fuel us for the coming week. We ask you for peace and reconciliation in our world of conflict and contentious relationships. Now instruct us as we embrace a new way to connect with you in deep and abiding love. We are your people; inspire us Lord as you fill us with your spirit, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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I invite you this morning to relax, take a deep breath, and experience for some of you what will be a new form of worship. It is intentionally a more ecumenical (which means all denominational styles, not just Baptist), and diverse (open to all cultures and languages) style of worship. Let me assure you that it is centered around the triune God (meaning God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit), the Holy Scriptures, sacred instrumental and sung music, prayers, fellowship, and the Lord’s Supper. This is one proven way to explore creating a traditional and current blended style of worship to attract guests of all ages to our church. We will **not** be changing worship every week, so thank you in advance for your patience, trust, and openness to the Spirit’s guidance.

As you read or can read on the insert, **Taizé,** for which this style is called comes from a village founded in the1940’s by Brother Roger Schutz, a Swiss protestant theologian. It is a monastic community made up of about 100 brothers from various countries, languages, and major denominations who are devoted to prayer, Christian unity, and peaceful reconciliation. They gather together 3 times a day, 7 days a week, throughout the year to pray. Many people journey to Taizé to experience the community and prayer life as well as the services as shown on our bulletin cover today.

Most unusual for us will be the use of a repetitive prayer set to simple musical lines and repeated. Melissa will play the tune and David will sing the words the first time, and then we’ll sing it together several times. We will not be using the hymnal today, but I assure you the music we will sing is based on Scripture. While we listen and sing, please immerse yourselves in the simple but profound meanings and let yourselves be carried by this sung prayer. Another characteristic of Taizé worship is its use of silence as a very important dimension of worship. Assume our five minutes of silence will be uncomfortable, so the first minute you must discipline yourself to breathe and relax into it; our typical history is to let our minds talk to God during the silence, and that is natural; but today’s goal is to listen for God. You may experience a laundry list of to-dos for the day or hear your stomach growl – that’s all ok! You may fidget, and if you must get up and walk around, that is fine, but please honor the silence for others. David and Melissa will musically escort us into silence, and I will gently bring us out of the silence with our second Scripture reading. There are crosses, candles and sayings on the table, or you may use the bulletin cover to focus your eyes or thoughts if you need something tangible. You may keep your eyes open or closed for contemplation. Remember, it is silent prayer and listening.

Last week I asked you what you are pondering, and that is another good thing to hold in your mind during the silence. Our world’s situations from our prayer sheet’s community prayers are good things to think about during the silence. Brother Roger says: “Praying does not remove us from the world’s preoccupations. On the contrary, nothing is more responsible than praying: the more we live a very simple, very humble prayer, the more we are brought to love and to express that by our lives.”

Another result of a Taizé prayer service is to reconnect with the awe, grandeur, and intimacy of God through our worship time together. This is done through music, the Scripture readings, the silence, and the communion. As we remember Jesus’ meal together with his disciples, let us remember the source and the object of our worship today. Through it, may we remember the delight in our Savior and feel expressed hope for ourselves, each other, and the world in which we live. Praise God from whom all blessings and beauty flow. Amen. ||

**Psalm 131 NIV**

*A song of ascents. Of David.*

1 My heart is not proud, Lord,  
    my eyes are not haughty;  
I do not concern myself with great matters  
    or things too wonderful for me.  
2 But I have calmed and quieted myself,  
    I am like a weaned child with its mother;  
    like a weaned child I am content.

3 Israel, put your hope in the Lord  
    both now and forevermore.

***NO RESPONSE****; please remain in silent contemplation*

**Community Prayer**

Today, we will not specify individuals, but ask God for healing for those who are suffering today. After each pause, respond: “Here us, Lord.”

And now, for the broader community, let us pray:

God is the author of peace; bless all those who work for peace. Let us now lift up prayers for peace. “Hear us, Lord.”

For an end to the violence perpetrated by harsh words, deadly weapons, or cold indifference. May our homes, our nation, and countries around the world become havens of peace, let us pray to the Lord. “Hear us, Lord.”

For the grace to see every human being as a child of God, regardless of race, language or culture, let us pray to the Lord. “Hear us, Lord.”

For healing and justice for all those who have experienced violence and racism, let us pray to the Lord. “Hear us, Lord.”

For the protection of all police and first responders who risk their lives daily to ensure our safety; for fair and just policing that will promote peace and wellbeing in all our neighborhoods, let us pray to the Lord. “Hear us, Lord.”

For our public officials, that they will strive to work for fair education, adequate housing, and equal opportunities for employment for all, let us pray to the Lord. “Hear us, Lord.”

For our mission, that we may cultivate welcome, extend hospitality, and encourage the participation of people of all cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds, let us pray to the Lord. “Hear us, Lord.”

For the courage to have difficult conversations about racism, and for a better appreciation of how our words and actions – or even our silence – can impact our communities, let us pray to the Lord. “Hear us, Lord.”

For solidarity in our global human family, that we may work together to protect those who are most vulnerable and most in need, let us pray to the Lord. “Hear us, Lord.” Thanks be to God, Amen.

**ENGAGING IN SILENCE ~ *5 minutes***

*Let us hear God speak in the silence . . .*

**Hebrews 4:9-13 NIV**

9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

13Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

***NO RESPONSE; please remain in silent contemplation***

**HOLY COMMUNION**

If anyone needs a communion cup, please raise your hand. As the disciples were gathered after a meal, Jesus, anticipating his time on the cross and the end of his earthly presence, took the bread and broke it to serve them, saying, this is my body broken for you. Take eat and remember me. In the same way, he poured out the wine, saying take this drink, and remember it is the blood of my new covenant with you. Drink and be thankful, as you remember me. So, we take these elements, and begin with the wafer, and end with the juice, confessing our sins, being forgiven, and remembering our Lord and Savior.

**BENEDICTION / Closing Prayer**

***Let us pray*.** Dear Lord, we humbly thank you today for these reminders to rest in your presence. May your Spirit strengthen us and empower us every day to be your disciples, and to lead others to you. Enrich and refuel our lives with inspiring rituals and prayer to so that we can serve you and this community in new ways. Now let us hear the prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi:

“Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.”

It is in Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.