

BEARD'S HOLLOW CHURCH, AUGUST 21, 2022

Opening Song & call to worship: We are Many Parts

♪ *We are many parts, we are all one body, & the gifts we have, we are given to share.*

May the Spirit of love make us one indeed.

One the love that we share, one our hope in despair, one the cross that we bear.

God of all, we look to you, we would be your servants true,

Let us be your love to all the world.

So my pain is pain for you, in your joy is my joy too;

all is brought together in the Lord.

All you seekers great and small, seek the greatest gift of all:

if you love, then you will know the Lord. ♪

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q77uRQxKDCY>

Prayer of Confession

[Peter] Most loving and forgiving Lord, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, & from whom no secrets are hid:

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[All] **Amen**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [From the Lutheran Bk of Worship]

[Face each other & confess your need for mercy]

[All] I confess to almighty God, & to you my brothers & sisters that I have sinned through my own fault. In my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done & in what I have failed to do. And I ask all the angels and saints, & you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God. [adapted from a Catholic penitential prayer]

Assurance of Pardon

[Peter] God, the Father of mercies, by the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the power of that Holy Spirit, God has given us pardon and peace. May we receive that healing peace with open hearts and share it with one another and the world. [adapted from the Catholic rite of reconciliation]

Touch of the Master's Hand [The Master will heal our broken lives]

Opening Prayer

[Anna] Abba, Father, through **Christ** your beloved **Son** you brought us to the knowledge of your truth, that we might become his body, bound together by one faith & one baptism.

Through Christ you have given your Holy Spirit to all peoples.

How wonderful are the works of the Spirit, revealed in such varied gifts!

Yet how marvelous the unity which the Spirit creates, dwelling in the hearts of your children, filling the whole Church & guiding it with wisdom from above.

We give you thanks for all the gifts you have given to your people & we pray that we may grow in peace, unity & reconciliation, through Jesus Christ in the power of your Holy Spirit.

Amen [adapted from the Preface for Unity of Christians in the Catholic Mass]

Taizé Chant

[Instead of singing many verses of a hymn, chants like this are sung many times to allow the prayer to move from the head to the heart]

♪ *Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas, Deus ibi est.* ♪ [Where there is charity & love, God is present]

[\(313\) Ubi caritas \[Taize\] - YouTube](#)

1st Reading: A reflection by Brother Roger Schutz of Taizé

Reconciliation between Christians is not in order to be stronger against anyone, but to be a ferment of reconciliation & confidence for believers & all others. Christians would withdraw into themselves if that passion of Christ, reconciliation, did not open out to a passion for peace & reconciliation in the entire human family.

Making your own the best of the gifts of the [Eastern] Orthodox churches means entrusting yourself to the joy of a presence – of the Risen Lord, & of the Holy Spirit.

Making your own the best of the gifts of the churches of the Reformation means placing your confidence in the Word of God in order to put it into practice at once in your daily life.

Making your own the best of the gifts of the Catholic Church means welcoming the irreplaceable presence of Christ in the Eucharist, welcoming it with the forgiveness given at the very source of reconciliation.

♪ *Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us; Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us.*
Melt us, mold us, fill us, use us; Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us. ♪

2nd Reading: A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Galatians

Through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ
have clothed yourselves with Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person,
there is not male **and** female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you belong to Christ, then you are descendants of Abraham & Sarah,
heirs according to the promise.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel Alleluia: Celtic

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me/ who has sent me to bring good news/
To the poor, / the oppressed /& the rejected. /

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42 [NAB 1970]

On their journey towards Jerusalem, / Jesus entered the village of Bethany /
where a woman named Martha / welcomed him to her home. /

She had a sister named Mary, /

who seated herself at the Lord's feet / & listened to his words. /

Martha, who was busy with all the details of hospitality, / came to him & said,

"Lord, / are you not concerned / that my sister /

has left me to do the household tasks all alone? / Tell her to help me." /

The Lord in reply said to her: /

"Martha, Martha, / you are anxious & upset about many things; /

one thing only is necessary. /

Mary has chosen the good portion / & she shall not be deprived of it." /

The Word of the Lord

The "Message"

[Peter] We are gathered as the Body of Christ. Just as our human bodies have many members & it is still one body, we can use our whole bodies to praise the Christ into whom we have been baptized.

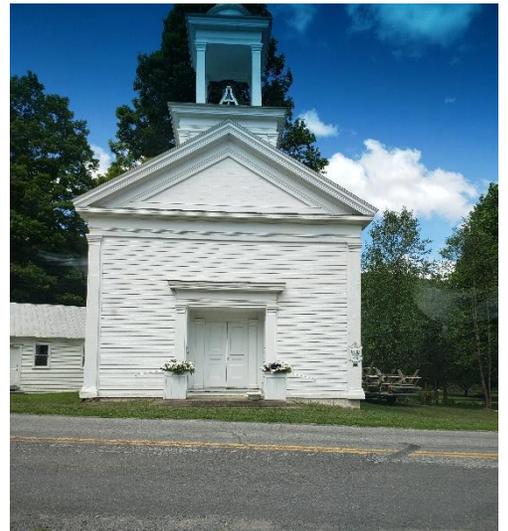
♫ Sacred the land, sacred the water, Sacred the sky holy and true.

Sacred all life, sacred each other, All reflect God who is good. ♪

We were with you 11 years ago, in 2011, just one week before Hurricane Irene came through the county. We spoke about how the church is more than a building, & you experienced the loss of many of the buildings that housed the church in Schoharie County. I'm surprised you invited us back!

It is a great privilege to be here as part of the answer to the Prayer of Jesus, that all may be one. We want to reflect with you about how to be the Body of Christ & how to grow into a deeper unity as members of His Body.

When this gathering was described to me, it was called "non-denominational." I would rather call it "inter-denominational," because we each come from different Christian traditions & share from the riches of our own experience of the Body of Christ.



On August 7th, the leader was from the Reformed Church; last week, the preacher was from the Baptist Tradition. We come to you to share our faith in Christ as part of the Catholic Tradition.

I am a Franciscan Friar & a Catholic priest; Sr. Anna is a member of the Catholic order of *Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Scranton, PA*.

Brother Roger wrote about this in the first reading for today. Pope John Paul II, now called a saint in the Catholic church, wrote about those riches in his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*.

"Could it not be that these divisions [among Christians] have also been a path continually leading the Church to discover the untold wealth in Christ's Gospel & in the redemption accomplished by Christ? Perhaps all this wealth would not have come to light otherwise...." [*Crossing the Threshold of Hope* by Pope St John Paul II, p. 153]

Just as church is much more than a building, an institution or a single denomination, the Body of Christ has many parts. Brother Roger, a member of the Reformed tradition, not only wrote the words we heard this morning, he began a community which included members of all the Christian traditions.

Thousands of young people come to Taizé every week in the summer to sing the songs & to share their lives & faith with each other. They do not convert to another denomination, they remain grounded in their own lives. Many begin to believe in Christ more deeply, even more begin or grow in living the values of Jesus.

When I was at Taizé in the early 90's, I experienced how the Body of Christ can be BOTH one Body & many parts. There are 3 times of prayer each day. When I asked young people in English & French, the 2 languages I can speak, why they had come to Taizé, almost every one of them said, "for the prayer" Every week of the Summer, 5-7 thousand young people come & stay for a week.

Evening Prayer at Taizé <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=da8Qf9h5quo>

Chants like the ones we are singing today, are sung in different languages at the same time, repeated over & over. They touch the heart as much as the head, & often sing themselves in the mind after the prayer time is ended.

As I moved from one part of the huge tent to another, I could hear 5,000 voices, mostly young people, singing in their own language at the same time. I heard chants in Polish, French, Italian & English all sung with the same melody in a different language.

I was moved to tears at this experience of the unity in diversity of the Body of Christ. Here is a taste of how it sounded:

♪ O poverty, source of riches, Jesus, grant to us one heart with the lowly.

O pobreza! Fuente de riqueza; Señor siembra nos alma de pobre! ♪

Confiance du Coeur, source de lumière, Jésus donne nous un Coeur de pauvre.

The reading from Galatians makes it clear that we are one body through the Baptism we share.

*"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male **and** female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

Perhaps we could say in our time, in this place: In Christ there is neither Catholic nor Lutheran, Reformed or Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian, & so on.

We had the privilege of preaching in the Lutheran Church in Middleburgh 2 weeks ago. We even stole some of the words from their book of worship to begin this service. Then we adapted words from the Roman Catholic prayers of Reconciliation & a prayer from the Mass for Christian Unity as part of our opening prayers.

Those things we sometimes see as divisions can also be seen as gifts we share with each other. Then we become aware that there is more that unites us as members of the Body of Christ than what divides us.

[Anna] The reading from Galatians includes that we are ALL HUMAN (not *merely* male & female). The Gospel passage we chose is an illustration of that truth. Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus, in the position of a disciple. In the culture of that time, women were not allowed to be disciples.

I wonder where Lazarus was in the home at Bethany. He may well have been right there beside his sister, Mary, listening to Jesus. Some commentators have said that Lazarus was a former high priest. That's why his being raised from the dead by Jesus caused such a stir among the Jewish leaders.



The Gospel story is a call to be reconciled within ourselves as well as among each other. As Augustine writes, "*Martha & Mary are sisters!*" Jesus was not putting Martha down, he was lifting both Mary & Martha up, & reminding them that they are sisters. In many translations of the Gospel, the last sentence is "*Mary has chosen the better part, & it will not be taken from her.*" But the original Aramaic is more like "*Mary has chosen the good portion for herself, which shall not be taken away from her.*"

Jesus was including both Martha & Mary in his embrace. He was calling them back to connection with each other & with him. Rather than eliminating the tension between them, He was restoring the right tension between the details of hospitality & the purpose of welcoming a guest. He is calling all of us, women & men, young & old, working

The story does not put Martha down. In chapter 11 of John's Gospel, she says words almost identical to those of Peter "Yes Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God: he who is to come into the world." [Jn 11:27] We need both the prayerful listening of Mary & the hard work of service of Martha to be true to our baptismal call to BE CHRIST for ALL.

We all need both times of rest & times of activity. We are called to alternate between service & prayer. Just as we need to breathe in & breathe out in order to live, we need to alternate between breathing in the love & truth of Christ & breathing out the love & truth of the Spirit of God if we are to truly live the Gospel of Jesus. This is not **only** true of **Christians**, but for every human being who wants to live well & be at peace

We no longer see the call of Christ to find the perfect balance in our lives or in the life of the church - we've discovered how impossible that is. We understand it as living creatively in the tension between prayer & work in our lives & between unity and diversity in our churches.

Let me give you an image of what I mean: If I take one of the strings from my violin, disconnecting it from the instrument, when I pluck it, you really won't be able to hear it.

But when it is on my violin, it can make beautiful music. Play "Bless the Lord."

What is the difference? Two things: **Tension_& Connection**. When the 4 strings are connected to the violin they are under tension, [66 pounds of it, to be exact] But it's not just any tension, they need to be **tuned** to just the right degree of tension to play the right note, and they are always tuned **in relationship** to each other. In the same spirit, we are called to be connected to Christ & each other and tuned to the vibration of the Gospel.

[Anna] This is a story of Activism & Artistry from Sue Monk Kidd, the author of *The Secret Life of Bees*, *The Invention of Wings* & *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*. It is an artistic reflection on living creatively in the tensions of our lives.

I want to begin by saying something about activism & artistry.

I have two friends. One is an **artist**

who spends a lot of time alone in his studio creating works

that are imbued with great soul & beauty. His work is full of God,

yet he has never brought any of this work out into the world.

My artist friend is, by nature, a contemplative - a mystic really.

He tends to have inward encounters with God.

He doesn't understand completely that the art of the soul

is not only for the artist, but also for the world.

I have another friend. She is an **activist**.

She spends her time in the fray of the world crusading for various causes.

She tells me that her activism sometimes falls prey to a kind of soulless-ness.

She is a reformer, a prophet.

She tends to have external encounters with the divine.

She doesn't fully understand that perhaps the most radical act

one can commit is to pray, that true words are born in silence

& true acts emerge from stillness.

I wish sometimes that my **artist** friend could find

my **activist** friend's passion for the world.

He is in need of some active grace.

I wish that my **activist** friend could discover

my **artist** friend's contemplative passion for the inner life of the soul. She is in need of

some inner grace.

And I wish this in myself,

that my *artistry* & *activism* dance a sybiotic dance together.

Intercessions & Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Oseh Shalom bimromav. Hu ya-aseh shalom aleinu.

V'al kol y'Israel, v'im ru, im ru amein.

Yah-seh shalom, Yah seh shalom shalom aleinu v'al kol y'Israel.

Yah-seh shalom, Yah seh shalom shalom aleinu v'al kol y'Israel.

May the One who makes Peace reign in heaven

*Send peace to all of us, to our nation & to the whole world,
amen, alleluia.*

Yah-seh shalom, Yah seh shalom shalom aleinu v'al kol y'Israel.

Yah-seh shalom, Yah seh shalom shalom aleinu ALL-E-LU-IA.