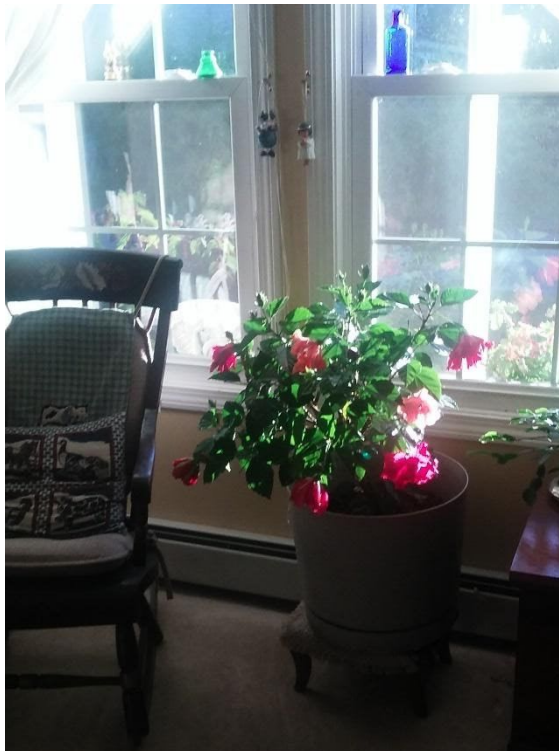


# **WORSHIPPING AT HOME**

*with UCC Westerly  
during the Covid-19 outbreak*

**March 15, 2020**

- ▣ Create a small worship space in your home anywhere. Add a candle, a bible and perhaps a small vase of flowers or a plant. Be sure to leave a place for Jesus! (See *At Home Worship Instructions!*)



- ▣ At 9:30am, the time we would usually gather in our sanctuary, settle into your worship space and begin...

- ▣ A reminder I will be attempting to livestream on Facebook for about 15 minutes beginning at 9:45am. Let me know if you need help to set up a Facebook account.

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**Light your candle as a reminder of God's presence with you**

**Call to Worship from Psalm 90:**

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

From everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,  
And establish the work of our hands.

**Opening Song:** "Sanctuary"

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true.

With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

*(Various instrumental, acapella and sung versions are available on youtube.com and most likely your favorite online music source. I am not providing a link here because I do not want to inadvertently violate copyright.)*

**Prayer of Self-Reflection:**

**Explorer God, you have put within us a spirit of adventure to move us beyond the immediate, and to see in the ordinary things your extraordinary presence of love. Propelled by your Spirit may each day become an adventure of people, tasks, places and responsibilities. And when we feel**

**gray and lifeless may you remind us that each day holds its own gifts: new truths, restored vision, inner healing and the possibility of forgiveness. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

[adapted from *An Iona Prayer Book*, (Millar, 1998)]

**TODAY'S SCRIPTURE:** Luke 10:25-37

Message "What do you read there?" Rev. Ruth

*"What do you read there?"*

Continuing on with our exploration of some of the questions of Jesus during this season of Lent, we turn our attention now to the Gospel of Luke for today's question. To understand it, we must first place it within the context in which Jesus asked it. He asks it of a person the text calls a "lawyer" immediately following a conversation Jesus was having with "the 70" who had just returned from the task Jesus had given them. This task was to go ahead of him to the towns he intended to visit and let them know he was on his way and what his message would be. The 70 had just returned and Jesus has just finished praising them for their efforts. Since the group gathered around Jesus at this point is presumably folks who were part of that 70, it is not a stretch to think this "lawyer" was part of that group. Be that as it may, the lawyer chooses this time to ask Jesus a question: "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

This is where our question for today comes in. Jesus answers him, "What is written in the law? *What do you read there?*" The lawyer gives the stock answer: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus assures him: "You have given the right answer; do this and you will live." Then comes the crux of the rest of this interaction with Jesus. "Wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" To this Jesus responds with the Parable of the Good Samaritan. You know that one. A man is beaten and robbed by thieves on the road. Two men pass by him without stopping to help, one a priest and one a Levite (both highly placed Temple authorities). The one who did stop to help was a Samaritan which was a despised and distrusted ethnic group in Jesus' time. It would be like saying an illegal immigrant stopped to help an ICE agent. And the Samaritan didn't just help the victim. He got the man to an inn where he could recover and he paid for all his expenses in advance. Quite a powerful illustration from Jesus in answer to the question, who is my neighbor!

So why aren't we considering that question this morning? First of all, we've talked about and thought about this Parable of the Good Samaritan so much that we know the answer – which is Jesus whole point – automatically. Who is my neighbor? Anyone who needs help. We should note that at the end of the parable Jesus reverses the question away from the lawyer's question. Jesus asks the lawyer to identify who in the story *acted like a neighbor* to the injured man. And again the lawyer answers correctly, "the one who shows mercy." This is an important point for us all to learn and remember along with the lawyer. But, it's not the whole point of this story.

We need to pay attention to that much earlier question Jesus asked the lawyer: What is written in the law? What do you read there?” Jesus is talking about the scriptures in his question to the lawyer. That is “the law” he is referring to. So, Jesus is telling the man right up front in response to his original cheeky question – the answer is right in front of you in the Scriptures you claim to know so well. What do you read in this book you know so well *as your profession* since this lawyer would have been trained in the Jewish law as written in the Torah. In other words, Jesus knows the man already knows the answer and Jesus knows he knows the answer.

So, what is Jesus is getting at here? A couple of things I think. #1 – He wants the man to know he knows he’s trying to trip him up or show him up. Petty behavior from a petty person. #2 – He wants the lawyer to go beyond the words of the law to its intent, to go deeper in his understanding of who God is and what God expects of him than is visible if he just looks at the ink on the paper. This, dear friends, is the same expectation Jesus has of us all the time. Yes, reading the bible is important – critically important to increase our understanding of what is written in the bible. But all that study, all that memorizing which some people do, is not enough. It doesn’t matter if you can quote scripture chapter and verse if you don’t know what it means in terms of how you live your life. It doesn’t matter if you can win a bible trivia contest if the faith the bible seeks to teach you is nowhere visible in your life.

“What do you read there?” is Jesus question to all of us, every time we pick up the bible. In this day and age it should also be our question for anything we pick up to read. Let’s face it, a lot of what passes for news and information in the media these days is pure garbage. Bias on both sides of the political divide is rampant making real truth hard to discern. That’s why Jesus’ question, “what do you read there?” is especially relevant and important to us today. We cannot assume we are experts just because we “read something.” Who wrote it? What was their goal in writing it? Can I find other articles saying the same thing? Is the author credible? All of these questions are Jesus questions as we seek to take responsibility for what we think we know.

“What do you read there?” is the question Jesus poses to us all the time – about the bible and indeed about everything we read all the time. How will you answer? Amen.

### **A Time of Prayer**

- Begin by making your own list of prayer concerns. Then sit in silence and let your mind calm down. Aloud or just in your own mind, ask God to bless each of the persons and situations on your list. End with the Lord’s Prayer.

### **A Prayer of Benediction**

*May the God of peace be with you, stilling the heart that hammers with fear and doubt and confusion. And may the warm mantle of your peace cover those who are*

*troubled and anxious. May the blessing of peace be on you and in you every moment of the week ahead. Amen.*

**TIME FOR JESUS CALLS!** Check out the *At Home Worship Instructions* to proceed.