

**WORSHIP KIT July 3, 2022**

**pianist—Linda Dimit**

**PRELUDE**

**CHIMING OF THE HOUR**

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**OPENING PRAYER**

We are here to remember the Sabbath, and as we do we remember your faithfulness, O God. You have called your people out of exile and enslavement. You have named us as yours to live in the freedom of new life in Christ. You have brought us here, made us a community and we have known your love. Accept the offering of our worship and open our hearts to your Spirit that we may be equipped to serve you in faithfully.  
Amen.

**\*CONGREGATIONAL INTROIT :**

**“Blest Be The Tie That Binds”**

**TWC 708 (V 1&4)**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP (from Psalm 148)**

**LEADER:** Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise God, sun and moon; praise the Lord, all you shining stars!

**ALL:** Let them praise the name of the Lord for God commanded and they were created. God established their bounds, which cannot be passed.

**LEADER:** Leaders of the earth and all peoples, young men and women alike, old and young together!

**ALL:** Let us praise the name of the Lord for God’s name alone is exalted; God’s glory is above the earth and heaven. Praise the Lord!

**\*OPENING HYMN “America, The Beautiful” TWC 418**

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION**

We have all sinned. We have all fallen short of what God intends for us. We are all offered grace nonetheless. We confess our sins that the burden of their weight be lifted and we be free to live and serve in the love we have received. Let us confess with trust in God’s goodness.

**\*UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Gracious God, you call us to journey with you. We accept the invitation, but we confess our unwillingness to follow the route you choose. We grow weary, frustrated, sure that we know a way that is easier. Flashy distractions pull us off the path, and we lose our way. Forgive our impatience and ingratitude. Correct our course and center our focus in you, our way through the wilderness.

**\*SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Pause)**

**\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Though we lose our way, God in Christ calls us back, forgives our sin and makes us new. Praise be to God, we are forgiven, free to serve boldly and love with the love of Christ!

**\*GLORIA PATRI**

**TWC 805**

1st SCRIPTURE READINGS

Galatians 5:13-14

2nd SCRIPTURE READINGS

Exodus 32:1-11,14

SERMON “Family (of Faith) Road Trip” Rev. Kellie Weekley Mills

Well we’re in the heart of Summer - and in the season for that perennial favorite: the family roadtrip! I have great memories of family vacations growing up - the beach, amusement parks, Washington DC during the bicentennial...Fun times, except for those interminable car rides that got us there and back again.

I have a brother. Three years younger than me. We were the denizens of the back seat during these road trips. And back then, no seat belt rules to keep us safely restrained - from killing each other. The soundtrack of these trips was not the top forty playing on the radio, but rather my brother and I constantly bickering and whining to our parents:

“Mom, he’s on my side!”

“Dad I’m starving!”

“She won’t share the cheezits!”

“He’s breathing on me!”

And of course, “Are we there yet?”

It’s really a testament to the fortitude of our parents that we weren’t left on the side of the road somewhere!

Long before the invention of the automobile, AAA and Cheezits, there was another family road trip. The family is leaving the home base of Egypt, destination: the Promised Land. Moses is at the wheel. God is the navigator. And thousands of Israelites are whining in the back seat. “Don’t make me stop this caravan!” may have actually slipped out of Moses’ mouth a time or two - you never know - I’m sure the sentiment crossed his mind.

This family of faith has been on the road for a while now, and the initial excitement has worn off, replaced by road weariness. The current discomfort is inspiring romantic notions of home - maybe a staycation would have been better, they think. Their feet hurt, they’re hungry and thirsty, they long to sleep in a real bed. Old Egypt isn’t looking so bad right now.

But Egypt isn’t comfy home with TV and a full fridge and your favorite pillow. Egypt was brutal. Living as a slave under Pharaoh’s rule. Making bricks, hauling bricks, stacking bricks, all day, everyday. That the children of Israel would even suggest that things were better back there seems unfathomable. Or does it?

While returning to unhealthy situations may be illogical, we humans are notorious for it. There is complicated psychology behind it. And in some instances, people in abusive relationships returning to an abuser - well that really is beyond their control. But apart from these extreme situations, we can still find ourselves consciously choosing to cling to unhealthy situations and patterns, simply because they are familiar.

For the Israelites, roaming the literal wilderness, with only Moses’ starry-eyed notion of a “Promised Land”, the fear of the *unknown road ahead* is real. At least back in Egypt they knew what to expect when they woke up each morning.

At least they had a bed, and a space to call “home”. For all intents and purposes they are homeless - all their belongings packed on their wagons or their backs.

They are hungry, and while God has provided “manna from heaven” there’s only so much you can do with that stuff, and it’s getting old, meal after meal.

I have to confess that I can't be too critical of their whining, because I may have been doing just that. I like to NOT be hungry, thirsty and exhausted. I like to have my journeys mapped out before I start the ignition. I have to admit that I would find it hard to keep from grumbling, from making suggestions for trip improvement, here and there. But they lose me with the golden calf.

Upon reaching Mt. Sinai, the company pauses, for God has the desire to converse, to outline the covenant that will define their relationship. The people hear what God has to say, and agree and are consecrated to the Lord. They are then told to wait while Moses and God "put it all in writing" and work out the details of the covenant. This is no small thing - Moses is up on that Mountain, hidden in the cloud of God's presence for no less than 40 days.

The people below are getting restless, and they wonder if maybe they haven't lost Moses - their driver, their leader, *their buffer*. Because it is not lost on them that this God is very powerful, quite frightening, and Moses has been the intermediary between them and this rather intimidating deity. A one-on-one relationship with the creator of the universe wasn't at the top of their wish list. Show us the right rituals to perform, give us the rules, they say, but don't ask us to face the almighty ourselves. We want a buffer.

Hence, the golden calf - much less intimidating than that living, moving, earth-shaking deity hovering over the nearby mountain. Yes, they agree, we can focus our worship on that. The shiny thing - the shiny thing will be a stand-in for the scary God.

And this is why I don't get the golden calf. Now I've outright hid from or ignored God's Spirit on occasion, but I've never wanted something as a buffer between me and God. But this is because I know something the Israelites did not. You know it too. You and I know God, not just as a rumbling cloud on a mountaintop, *but as Jesus* - God in human form, walking beside us, eating at the table with us, looking into our eyes as he speaks words of challenge and encouragement.

The children of Israel did not know God this way. They perceived that they had a crisis on their hands. Without their guide, they feared chaos and destruction. In their attempts to course-correct, they entirely missed the point: they wanted a buffer when the whole point of this journey was to bring them into a closer, more personal relationship with God.

They wanted the freedom that the exodus brought. They had taken that initial step - out of Egypt, into the wilderness with God leading the way. They cheered as they escaped Pharaoh's army through the parted sea, they sang with Miriam, and had happily agreed to the initial covenant offer. But just like the family road trip, things can quickly go from sunny excitement to irritable discontentment.

The Israelites realize that they are being asked to be patient, and to bear the suffering of the present for a future that is better and brighter. It is suggested that perhaps they use this time to get to know the One who has brought them here.

The freedom they welcomed requires a step of faith - and they hesitate to take that step. They can't comprehend God's desire for such a connection, and in their lack of understanding they are afraid, and in their fear they create a buffer, a divide between them and God. They do not fully trust God, even though God has proven faithfulness, time and time again. Instead of relying on God to guide and provide they take things into their own hands. The covenant God wants to establish is exclusive - foremost on God's agenda: You won't have other gods. The covenant has boundaries and guidelines, and well, we know how we respond to that - rebellion!

What the people of Israel experienced is the human experience. *Freedom* is what we want, but we do not understand that freedom is not license to do whatever we want. We think we know best, we think we deserve to have it all, we think we don't need others - including God...Me thinks we think a little too highly of ourselves!

As Paul reminds the Galatians, we are called to freedom not as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love to become a true, holy community. Our God is a god of relationship - we are called to live in community with one another, and most importantly, in a relationship with our Creator. On this independence weekend, we celebrate freedom. As people of God, we celebrate the freedom that God calls us to, that God offers us in Christ Jesus. But we also acknowledge relationship. With God, with one another. It's not just about freedom for freedom's sake. We are free within the bounds of God's guidance - guidance shaped by love, selflessness, by the building of the blessed community.

A helium balloon has as its purpose to float - that is what it is made for. But if I go outside and just release it, it will take off, tossed here and there by the wind, and if it's not popped by something it encounters, it will continue to ascend to its destruction. Better I tether it with a string - it can then float, move about, be what it is made to be - but yet remain safe.

We are to be tethered to our center, to God. We are anchored in our knowledge of God, most clearly expressed through the life and lessons of Jesus.

We have been given quite a long string - lots of room to move and fly and be who we are made to be. But that connection to our maker ensures that our freedom doesn't derail our purpose or our focus. It is a connection made and kept through prayer, through study, in giving our time to worship and service. We also have the privilege of helping one another stay connected as we remind one another of the hope of our destination, despite the inevitable bumps in the road.

I know it is my privilege to enter into the journey of ministry with CCPC today. We are - all of us - stepping out in faith. Fortunately, our success isn't only reliant on you and me. We are tethered to a God who desires above all to be in relationship with us. To be our God, for us to be God's people. In this relationship, this connection to God, we know something real - no lifeless statue for us!

The road stretches out before us, our destination is clear, our route is prepared by the one who loves us most. I say, let's hit the road!

**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (Unison) Nicene Creed** (printed on the insert in the pew)

**\*HYMN "Seek Ye First The Kingdom Of God" TWC 447**

## **COMMUNION SERVICE**

### **THE THANKSGIVING**

Leader: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

**People: We lift them up to the Lord!**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

### **PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE**

### **CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

**"The Lord's Prayer"**

**TWC632**

### **DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS**

### **COMMUNION MUSIC**

**COMMUNION PRAYER** (in unison)

**God of abundance, with this bread of life and cup of salvation you have united us with Christ, making us one with your people. Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world and continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

**CALL TO OFFERING**

We are all members of God's family, and we all have various gifts to share. The one job we all have is to be stewards, for we have all received from God's hand, and are all called to share what we have been given. Let us be faithful; let us be selfless; let us give to the glory of God our offerings.

**OFFERTORY MUSIC**

**\*DOXOLOGY**

**TWC 809**

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

We have received from your hand, O God, mercy upon mercy, love upon love, blessing upon blessing. We humbly offer ourselves, our gifts, our time and our hearts. Make use of us and our gifts to serve others, to build disciples and glorify you always. Amen.

**\*HYMN**

**"My Country 'Tis Of Thee"**

**TWC 417**

**BENEDICTION**

"For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" You are free from sin and fear, you are free to live with the love of God. Go in faith, trusting that God goes before you, and walks beside you, and directs your path. Amen.

**\*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:**

**"God Be With You Till We Meet Again"**

**TWC 840**

**\*POSTLUDE**

**\*Please stand if you are able**