

Amen

“Amen”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – June 25, 2023

Lerna United Methodist Church’s Final Service

Readings: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 12:22-34

Reflection: Psalm 100

Greeting: This is the day that the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. Praise God!

Prayer: O Heavenly Father, we seek your wisdom and truth on this day. Let us join together with one voice and one heart to celebrate your presence in our lives. Help us to remember that we are one in Jesus Christ, our Lord. And may our advocate, the Holy Spirit, be a constant reminder of mercy and grace. We come together on this day so that we may celebrate the life of this church. We are thankful for the time that we have had together to worship you in this place. May you guide us and lead us this day, bringing us together in your love. Help us to celebrate your steadfast love that endures forever. May we turn to you always to help us in our daily lives, remembering the gentle guidance of the Spirit. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him; bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations. (Psalm 100 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 100 and we celebrate the Lord with joy. That no matter what, we have reasons to give thanks. That we always have a reason to praise God. How will you praise God today? How will you share God’s love with others? How will you carry a Spirit of forgiveness in all that you do? How can we share Christ with the world?

Prayer: O God, you are our hope and our praise. Help us to seek your wisdom in all that we are and do. May your Holy Spirit encourage us day by day. May we be strengthened by your steadfast love and faithfulness as we come before you in prayer, bringing to you our praise and our concerns. Help us Lord, that you lift us up in both our joys and our sorrows. May you be with us in grace and love in both our laughter and our tears. By your Spirit guide us and lead us to life everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading for today comes from Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verse 1 through 11.

There's a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens: a time for giving birth and a time for dying, a time for planting and a time for uprooting what was planted, a time for killing and a time for healing, a time for tearing down and a time for building up, a time for crying and a time for laughing, a time for mourning and a time for dancing, a time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones, a time for embracing and a time for avoiding embraces, a time for searching and a time for losing, a time for keeping and a time for throwing away, a time for tearing and a time for repairing, a time for keeping silent and a time for speaking, a time for loving and a time for hating, a time for war and a time for peace. What do workers gain from all their hard work? I have observed the task that God has given human beings. God has made everything fitting in its time, but has also placed eternity in their hearts, without enabling them to discover what God has done from beginning to end. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 CEB+)

Our next reading comes from Colossians chapter 3 verse 12 through 17.

Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. The word of Christ must live in you richly. Teach and warn each other with all wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts. Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:12-17 CEB+)

Our next reading comes from Luke chapter 12 verse 22 through 34.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Therefore, I say to you, don't worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. There is more to life than food and more to the body than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither plant nor harvest, they have no silo or barn, yet God feeds them. You are worth so much more than birds! Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? If you can't do such a small thing, why worry about the rest? Notice how the lilies grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all his splendor wasn't dressed like one of these. If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it's alive today and tomorrow it's thrown into the furnace, how much more will God do for you, you people of weak faith! Don't chase after what you will eat and what you will drink. Stop worrying. All the nations of the world long for these things. Your Father knows that you need them. Instead, desire his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well. "Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights in giving you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Make for yourselves wallets that don't wear out—a treasure in heaven that

never runs out. No thief comes near there, and no moth destroys. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be too. (Luke 12:22-34 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Today is an occasion for a lot of different feelings. Because the time has come for something new. Because there is a time for all things, today we celebrate the life of the Lerna United Methodist Church. For over 100 years this church has stood on this corner and has been a part of the community. It has been a part of your lives and mine. The time has come for the mission of this building to finish. But not the mission of you, the church. As we read in Ecclesiastes, there is a time for all things. A time for beginnings. A time for endings. And a time for new beginnings. Today we mark the end of the very long mission this building has had. We finish the use of this building as a place where we gathered to celebrate God with us. But it does not mark the end of our celebrations. I'll be honest, today is a hard day. I struggled to find the words because I know that I have to let go of something that has been a very important part of my life. It is hard for me not to choke up a little. Because I was thinking about what it was I wanted to say to you. And I thought I would give some advice for the future. Because in a parting of the ways, it seems like the best thing I could do is to once again help you prepare for what is to yet to come and the joys that you will find.

I was reminded of what Jesus had to say in Luke's Gospel. Because when Jesus is telling us not to worry about what to eat, about what to wear, he reminds us that the ravens don't plant, and they don't harvest. There's no building for them to gather in, but God feeds them. Yet all of you are so much more than birds. The lilies grow in the field. They don't wear themselves out with work. They don't spin cloth. They don't get dressed in the morning. But we can see the beauty of the flowers still. If God takes care of them, how much more will God watch over you? And so, I thought about these examples. That when Jesus is telling us not to worry about what we eat and what we drink, that maybe we could apply that to other aspects of our lives. That we can listen to what Christ has to say and apply it to where you praise God. No matter where you worship, God will be with you. God will be with you wherever you are and wherever you go. Wherever it is you praise the Lord, the Lord will indeed be praised. This old building has been here to shelter us in our prayers, in our thanksgiving, and in our praise. It has sheltered our sorrows and bolstered our celebrations. We have been housed so that we could worship in peace and in love. I am thankful for the time that we have had. For the years of support this building has given to so many people through the years. Yet we should also be reassured that God will be with us wherever we go. Because you and me? We are the church. Wherever we go, that is where the church is. Wherever we are, Christ is with us. The Holy Spirit will always guide us to where we need to be. Let us treasure the gift that we have in Christ, because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Tomorrow will always have new worries and concerns, so let us find peace in Christ. May we know that wherever we go from here that we go with God's blessings for his people. So, I did think Paul's words were fitting. They were fitting for this day and for sending you forth.

I wanted to say how thankful I am for the time I have been able to spend here. For the time that I have had with you. That I have been honored to serve you in ministry here. But I know that your journey in Christ and mine are not finished. So, as Paul says, let us clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Let us do these things so that we may share the love of Christ with one another and with everyone that we may meet. Let us forgive one another just as we have been forgiven. And let us remember that wherever we go from here we will still be able to pray. We will still be able to sing. We will still be able to praise God. And praise God we will. So, we should sing to God with gratitude in our hearts. That whatever we do, in our actions or in our words, we should do it all in the name of the Lord. That we should give thanks. And I am thankful. I am thankful that my journey with Christ brought me here, where I needed to be. That the Holy Spirit brought me to be with you under this roof. And now I am sending you forth. But I know that you and I will always be united in the Holy Spirit. You and I will always be together in Christ. That we will always be together in the presence of our Heavenly Father. We are united as well with all those who have worshipped here before us. And we are united as one with all who worship anywhere. We share a bond in one baptism and in one Spirit that guides in in this life and the next. So let us sing songs of praise. Let us lift up prayers of thanksgiving. Let us be thankful for the time that we have here and let us rejoice in what comes next. Because whatever we do and wherever we go, Christ is with us. No matter what we have cause to celebrate because God is with us. We have cause to rejoice because the Spirit guides us. There is a time for everything under heaven. There's always a time for beginnings and a time for endings. But every new beginning is some other beginning's end. Just as all things pass away, we can see all things made new again because God is always doing something new. And God is always moving us to where we need to be. So, my prayer for you this day is that God be with you till we meet again. May the Holy Spirit guide you and lead you wherever your journey goes. May our Heavenly Father watch over you. And may the love of Christ join your heart to mine. That wherever you are, I will be praying for you. And I will be giving thanks that God led us to this place that we could be together. I will be celebrating wherever it is that God takes us next. May God's love be with you always. And I say this with a heart full of gladness: this church will always be a part of my life and the life of my family. So, let God's people say "Amen." Amen, indeed.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – *The Spirit Moves*

Our current series looks at how we are moved by the Holy Spirit. In it, we will explore how we are united in love through the Spirit and the many different ways that the Spirit moves within us.

May 28th – *Moved to Call* – Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23

June 4th – *Moved as One* – Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 4:1-6, 25-32

June 18th – *Moved with Gifts* – 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; Acts 19:1-7

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Our Healthcare Workers	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan
Brittany Gilbert	Phil Hawickhorst	Ray Carr	Jane Williams
Alice Sherwood	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Steve Carlen
Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz	Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters
Jess Shoot	Stanley Kiser	Corine Howard	Don Gilmore
Shirley Jester	Connie Brown	Don Blade	Marsha Overton
Darin Pease	Linda Carlen	Michael Nichols	Paul Cox
Taylor Waldorf	Harriet Tucker	Becky McGuiness	Joyce Sly
Sharla Tucker	Carson White	Dave Green	
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Greg Williams	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lavon Figgins	Kara Newton	

Rev Camron D St. Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

cdstmichael@outlook.com

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

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