

PRFM Worship Service 7/5/26

Opening

Good morning, I am Jim Burkett. I'll be leading worship this morning. Mary Jo Granger is leading the music ministry. Scott Lockhart is on technology, and John Reed is in the ether. Just a reminder, if you want to speak, use the microphones. Hold them close to your mouth and remember to project your voice so all in the room can hear. The microphones only amplify sound into the ether so those on Zoom and those using headphones can hear. They do not amplify your voice into the room.

From Bishop Robert Barron – Everyone operates under the aegis of something he or she considers supreme, a summum bonum or highest good, a god. No one would get out of bed in the morning unless he/she believed in some value that is ultimately motivating his/her actions and decisions. This might be bodily pleasure or fame or material goods, or it might be one's country or family, [or it might be service to others, etc.] but if it is functioning as the prime mover of a person's activity, it is playing the role of a god and it is being, in effect worshiped.

Hymn

#299 Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream

Readings

1. Jeremiah 29: 5, 7 – reciting what Jeremiah tells the Israelites taken into captivity in Babylon: “ This is what the Lord God says to all those carried into exile: Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce ... seek the peace of the city in which you find yourselves.”
2. Hebrews 13:14 – the writer is telling the Christians: “For here we do not have a lasting city.”
3. I Peter 2: 9-10 – the writer of I Peter tells the Christians: “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.”

Joys and Concerns

Prayer

Between the words,
Beneath the words,
Beyond the words,
Spoken and unspoken,
O Holy One
You hear.
Empower us to respond
As your eyes, ears, hands, and feet
So your community can do your will.

Hymn

#304 A Song of Peace

Message

I have struggled to know what to share with you on this Sunday morning, the day after the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. I initially had mapped out thoughts that to me sounded like an appropriate response of the “Peace Churches” to the hoopla of the 4th of July. But it sounded too heady, too intellectual. Suzanne’s message two weeks ago, “This I Believe,” set me on another course, one that is more personal.

Some of you will remember that time of passage into adulthood for boys. When turning 18 every boy had to register for the draft. It meant you were no longer a child; now you were a man. I made that passage and filled out the form required for a conscientious objector. And then I went to college receiving a student deferment and thinking little about the draft board and its activities.

In the January of my second year of graduate school with a very new born son, I received a letter from the draft board telling me to report to Kansas City for induction into the United States army. There I was in Winnipeg, Canada, 5 months away from graduation, a new father and deeply committed to the path of peace and non-participation in any form of armed conflict or preparation for such. I faced a dilemma, a crisis in my life. I resolved to appeal the decision, knowing the decision

may not change the draft board's decision, which for me would mean staying in Canada. I could never go home again. In the end after a couple months of anxiety and appealing to higher levels the decision was reversed and I was granted CO status to take effect after completing graduate school.

I look back on that crisis with a different perspective than I had at the time. Then it was an immediate refusal to serve in the armed forces and preserve my beliefs and conscientious objector status. But years have showed me that what was being asked in the letter instructing me to report for induction was something much larger. The letter was asking me to turn my allegiance, my worship, my focus to another god. For want of a better title I'll called that god – the Eagle – the god of power, nationalism, and military prowess, the god that has the responsibility to protect his consort, the Bull – the god of wealth.

The Eagle demands a lot of us – money (taxes), allegiance, reverence, devotion, pride in its power, hymns of glory, celebrations of its activities and prowess, and sacrifice, even sacrifice of our children – all descriptions of ways to worship.

When making that decision to refuse to report for induction into the armed forces, I made a statement of allegiance, of worship to the God of love and peace, in essence asserting my belief that, even at the risk of never being able to return home, love and peace are the way humans must interact with each other.

July 4th every year is in many ways a celebration of the prowess of the Eagle.

Now nearly 60 years later I still find myself asking, "How do I feel about this 4th of July celebration?" Jeremiah told the Israelites when taken into captivity to Babylon "to seek the welfare of the city where you find yourselves." The writer of Hebrews tells us that the followers of Jesus have "no lasting city." This creates ambivalence for me. I struggle to feel good about the hoopla and fireworks.

Can I be patriotic? Three observations:

1. I love my family, my neighbors, the people of my community. Where I go in this country I generally find people kind and friendly. It's easy to feel a kinship with them and compassion for them. I grieve that some of them

worship the Eagle. Still, as with any other human being, I respect and have compassion for them regardless of their beliefs.

2. I find myself captivated by the ideals espoused by our founding documents – equality of all people, liberty, justice, and freedom of thought, belief assembly and press. These are the some of the basic principles on which the Anabaptist and Quaker movements were founded four and five centuries ago. We here, in this Meeting have a deep affinity for these ideals.
3. I am inspired by the beauty of the landscape of this nation/state in which we live. And I even find myself attached to those places where I have called home. But I know that other people in other nations are inspired by and attached to their countryside.

I am a citizen of the United States. I am also a citizen of the planet Earth. And I choose to give my highest allegiance to the Creator God of the Universe, the God of Peace and Love making me a citizen of what is sometimes called the Kingdom of God.

Despite my stumbles and shortfalls this allegiance has guided my life and career. Following the God of love and peace, which is also referred to as the Dove, has not been a walk in the park for me. Self-centeredness, greed, and other maladies creep into my life to avert my focus. But, following this path helps me focus on the fact that there is “that of God in each of us,” and we are continually invited to “walk in the light.”

Hymn

#18 O God of All Creation

Concluding Prayer

Temptations

Oh, you false gods,
I find myself caught in your snare.
Your talons seem invincible.

You and your consort make life
feel free and pleasurable.
I become engrossed
in the power and glamor you offer.
It's easy to slide through life
absorbed in the lies you spew,
believing them to be the truth.

You hide in the shadows.
Your dealings transpire in the dark.
Your self-serving actions
and warmongering
heap injustice and misery
on the downtrodden.
You take from the poor
to enlarge your personal treasury.
Your footsteps upon the earth
leave a rotten stench
despite the perfume
with which you adorn yourself.
I rebuke you.

Turn now, from these false gods.
Place your faith in compassion
for all living things,
in the light that illuminates
the path of love,
in the road less traveled.

After Thoughts

Introductions

Announcements

