

**Unrecognizable: Our Future in Christ****Sunday, May 9th, 2021 || 6th Sunday of Easter || Pastor Christy Wright****Yes, we are meeting outdoors at 9:30 AM, this Sunday in front of the Church!****For full details, please read below in the Community Announcements Section.**

If you are unable to join us in person, we invite you to light a candle at 9:30 AM and join us in prayer online or over the phone for a pre-recorded service. Audio worship, including the prelude and postlude, prayers, and the sermon is available at <https://georgewhitefieldumc.weebly.com/worship-services> or over the phone at (978) 990-5000, access code 719365#. Just dial in, enter the access code on your keypad, and you will hear the service begin with music. Note that we may not be able to include the hymns in pre-recorded services - thank you for your understanding.

**Announcements****Opening Hymn****Scripture Reading - John 15:9-17, 26-27**

*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.*

**Sermon**

As I was preparing for this week's service, a song kept popping into my head: *All You Need is Love* by The Beatles.

*All you need is love (all together now)*

*All you need is love (everybody)*

*All you need is love, love*

*Love is all you need*

When this song was first released in 1967 during the Summer of Love, we were in the midst of the first Civil Rights Movement in the US. Generally speaking, there were two responses to this Beatles hit: the first one was that life was as simple as love - all we need to do is love one another, and we can solve any conflict that comes our way. But a second response arose: we are naïve to think that love is the *only* solution to the world's problems. This was a rejection of the tranquil and hazy notion that undefined and unchallenging love can do anything.

For anyone who has been married for a year or seventy years, love is hard sometimes. On the outside, it looks like love is a never-ending honeymoon period. Love is this euphoric timelessness that carries you through anything and everything. Rather, on the inside, love is mostly unrecognizable from the fairy tales - there are conversations to be had, apologies to make, wrong-doing to confront, and reconciliation on the other side.

In this morning's scripture passage, we hear Jesus imploring the disciples to remember his love and the love of God in all they do. In this, there is great joy - joy that deeply abides through the paradise of love and the heartache of wounded spirits. Jesus tells the disciples that they have a new model for love: they've heard the phrase, "love one another as you love yourself," but they've never heard that they were called to love as Jesus loves. This challenge to love suddenly became much more difficult for the disciples, for human love is imperfect, but divine love is pristine. How were they to ever meet Jesus' gold standard of love?

The good news is that we aren't alone in this: Jesus sent the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to lead us in such love. And, if we go back to the original language in the passage, we find a richer definition of love; it's not some dreamy emotion, but rather, the concept of love in this passage has implications for our everyday life. The word for love in this case is *agape* in Greek, which comes from the Latin for *caritas* - which means *charity*. This means that we love by *doing*, not simply feeling something toward other people. Love, in other words, is a verb. So when Jesus says, "Love others as I have loved you,"

what he's actually saying in the original language is, "*do* unto others as I have *done* for you." This is why Jesus explains love through the image of laying down one's life for others. To love others in Jesus' example is to speak life into another's situation, not death. To love others is to offer our whole selves in commitment to healing and reconciliation. To love others is to be open to the transformation of a relationship, even when that means stepping back, stepping in, or stepping up. As Scholar Carmelo Álvarez puts it, "Love becomes a transforming power more than a superficial and emotional expression."<sup>1</sup>

And Jesus has appointed us to do this work. To be appointed is an honor, and a serious thing: it is a commitment we make to follow through on. Just as a pastor in the United Methodist Church is appointed, and goes where called, so too we are called by God to go where God sees work to be done - by us.

As close this sermon series about being unrecognizable Christians in a world that so desperately needs God's love, as we look to the future, we are called to respond to Jesus' appointment for us: bear the fruit of the Spirit, of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. We are called to *be the Body of Christ*, and do love.

So go, bear fruit. So go, love. So go, transform the world. For we go not alone, but in the example of Jesus Christ, sustained by God the Creator, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### ***Hymn of Meditation***

**In Our Prayers.** Thanksgiving for: the gifts that make ministry possible, medical professionals and researchers. Holding in our hearts: those experiencing unemployment, those facing racial injustice and violence, for our world as we continue to combat gun violence, for our congregation as we grieve the loss of loved ones, those experiencing illness or health issues - especially those who are ill with Covid-19 - for Mary Jane, and (for Al (and family as they care for him), Dan D. (Vicki's husband), Kelly R., Lindsey S., Richie B.), those in nursing homes or extended care facilities (Betty, Claire), those caring for others (Carrie G., Crystal, Rachel), the United Methodist Church. *Note that this list will renew each month.*

### ***Benediction***

*And now, may the peace of the Lord Christ go with you wherever God may send you; may God guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm; may God bring you home rejoicing at the wonders God has shown you; may God bring you home rejoicing once again into our doors.*

### **Community Announcements**

- **Introducing: Certified Lay Minister Sandy Dam!** My name is Sandy Dam and I was raised in the neighboring town of Charlton on a small farm that has been in my father's family since 1871. I enjoyed growing up with four siblings playing softball, croquet, volleyball, cards and many other games, as well as learning the value of hard work and cooperation. My faith journey began at a very early age as I attended Sunday School and then church with my grandmother at Charlton City United Methodist Church. I collected all those wonderful perfect attendance pins and enjoyed learning the stories of Jesus. I was active in the youth group and began teaching Sunday School at age 17. I joined the choir, UMW, Administrative Council and after I graduated, I became one of the youth leaders spending at least four nights a week and Sunday serving at the church. This provided the strong foundation to fuel my passion for helping others and spreading the joy of knowing Christ which now drives me daily. || My husband and I, having met through church, have been married over 30 years and raised two wonderful daughters on the same farm where I grew up and within the same church family. My daughters both recently graduated college while my husband went through a career change which spurred the question and regular discussion within our home of "what do I want to be when I grow up"? These conversations inspired me to consider the gifts that have been given to me, so I began to take lay leadership classes and was soon appointed as Spiritual Growth Coordinator and then Lay Leader. I started to feel the presence of God directing me further towards the ministry and will admit that I ignored these nudges for a while. Then, during the pandemic, I decided that I wanted people to experience the peace and joy that comes with knowing that Jesus is right there beside us through every facet of our lives which prompted me to complete my Certified Lay Ministry Classes. I was not sure where it would lead but now, I know. It has led me to be part of your ministry at George Whitefield in West Brookfield! || I believe that as a leader in the church it is not about any personal accomplishment but about the grace that is given and received. My hope is to share our faith journeys, build spiritual connections, and together spread His glory. I greatly look forward to serving with you!

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<sup>1</sup> *Feasting on The Word*, Carmelo Álvarez

- Introducing: Coordinating Pastor Rev. John H.D. Lucy!** Rev. John H.D. Lucy is entering his eighth year of pastoral ministry and his second at Charlton City UMC, having previously served two appointments: Memorial UMC in Swanton, VT, and Waterbury Center and Jericho UMC, in VT. He went to Wesley Theological Seminary, in D.C., and graduated with honors with a Master of Theological Studies degree. Before that, he graduated from St. Michael's College in Colchester, VT, summa cum laude with a degree in English and religious studies. Pastor John's ministry thus far has focused on a reclamation of Methodism, teaching and reminding what the movement was and is meant to be. Why did God raise up the people called Methodists? He also currently serves on the Open Spirit Task Force, Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA), and District Finance Committee. || Somewhere along the way, Pastor John rode his bicycle across the country, from D.C. to Michigan to Texas to New Mexico, to raise awareness of and to fight human trafficking, in conjunction with Polaris Project (now simply Polaris). Afterwards, he wrote a book, *27 Million Revolutions for 27 Million Slaves*, which was followed by another, *Created Human Divinity: A Theology of Empowerment Developed Through Dialogue*. Good thing he wasn't married yet or his wife would have feared for his sanity, trying to make a living as a writer. Pastor John has been married for seven years come this June to his lovely and spiritual wife, Danielle, with whom he has two sons, Sebastian and Soren, ages 5 and 3. || Most of all, Pastor John is excited to start work as a coordinating pastor, especially because it's Sandy Dam he gets to work with. He believes their spiritual gifts are well suited for these ministry roles.
- Pastor Christy Vacation.** Pastor Christy will be away from May 10th to May 17th, and will be unable to respond to phone calls or emails. Pastoral Coverage will be provided by Rev. Amie McCarthy of the Spencer UCC, who can be reached at (508) 272-6437. There will be no in-person worship service on Sunday, May 16th; a special at-home worship service will be mailed out that week, and the audio service will be available on our website at [georgewhitefieldumc.weebly.com/worship-services](http://georgewhitefieldumc.weebly.com/worship-services) or over the phone at (978) 990-5000, access code 719365#. Regular outdoor in-person worship services will resume on Sunday, May 23rd.
- NO IN-PERSON SERVICE ON MAY 16TH.** Because Pastor Christy will be on vacation that week, we will not be holding in-person worship. Worship services will be mailed out that week and the audio worship service will be available on our phone line and website.
- Ad Council Meeting (and others who wish to join).** Ad Council will be meeting on Sunday, May 23rd after church in the fellowship hall. All are welcome as we make important decisions.
- IN-PERSON OUTDOOR WORSHIP RESUMES! Update from the Reopening Advisory Board.** We are meeting **weekly** at 9:30 AM **in front of the church**, weather permitting. Regardless of vaccination status, **masks and social distancing are required** in order to limit our risk factors. Remember to bring your lawn chair, wear your mask, and be sure to set yourself up at least six feet from folks who are not part of your household. Should weather become a concern, Pastor Christy will begin a phone chain by Saturday at 4 PM prior to the service. Indoor worship possibilities are still being explored. As always, if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns about in-person worship, feel free to reach out to anyone on the Reopening Advisory Board: Jane Dolan, Tom McKeon, Diane Mundell, Melissa Quilitzsch, or Pastor Christy.
- UPDATE ON MAILINGS.** In order to save on postage, mailings will now be available on Sunday mornings for pickup at our outdoor services. Mailings will no longer automatically be sent out; if you are unable to join us in person, mailings will be dropped in the mail on Monday mornings so all folks can continue to be part of our connection.
- Pastor Christy's Office Hours: MAY.** Pastor Christy's office hours have shifted to **Mondays** and **Tuesdays** from 8 AM to 4 PM and **Fridays** from 8 AM to 12 noon. If you have an emergency outside of office hours, please call her cell phone, leave a message, and she will get back to you as soon as possible.
- Prayer Chain.** As a church, we are a wonderful community of prayer. When a need arises, we send it through the prayer chain so we can all meditate together. If you would like to be a part of this prayer chain, reach out to Jane Dolan, who will put you on the list.
- THANK YOU for your continued generous donations to the work of the church!** We are so grateful for your gifts, for they make an impact near and far. As a reminder, you can mail your offerings to PO Box 576, West Brookfield, MA 01585. Thank you!

### Sonshine Phone Calls and Cards List

If you know of anyone who could be added to our Sonshine list, let Pastor Christy know.

Betty Hubbard

47 E Main St.

West Brookfield, MA 01585

Kelly Rice

98 Lake Shore Drive

West Brookfield, MA 01585

Claire Wirf

(508) 791-8131 (mornings)

838 Mill Street

Worcester, MA 01602

Richie Buzzell

16 Ragged Hill Rd.

W Brookfield, MA 01585

**Daily Devotionals:**  
**A Community Of Prayer from Around the Connection**  
*The Upper Room Daily Devotionals official magazines are still being distributed.*

*If you would like a copy, please let Pastor Christy know.*

**Monday, May 10th through Saturday, May 15th || Written by Various Authors in the Conference**  
*We invite you to light a candle at 9:30 AM daily, meditate on our given scripture, and join us in prayer*

**Monday, May 10th, 2021**

**Rev. Dr. David V. Calhoun, Seacoast District Superintendent**

**Read John 15:1-8**

Eternal God, we give thanks and praise for the gift of this new day, and we lift our hearts to you as the source of our strength and inspiration. Our intercession is but a response to your ceaseless outpouring of love. O God, of light and love, author of creation, help us meet this day with courageous minds; and loving spirits. We celebrate the gift of life you have blessed us with, and gratitude swells within. Help us to experience your abiding presence, be uplifted by your joy, and empowered by your love. As we seek to fulfill our responsibilities, help us to realize that you are the one who provides all the resources with which our lives can be meaningfully sustained. We pray for a heart like Jesus. We pray for courage in all that we think, do, and say. Keep us close to the vine and root of our lives, and give us wisdom in our decisions and love in our associations. Help us to find a real and lasting solution to our social problems. "Cut off the growth our fears have spun and prune us to your vine." Give us a world where we make no distinction between people based on gender, race, economics, nationality, culture, and religion. Nurture us to a maturity that wants for others, every healthy experience we want for ourselves. Nurture us in growth toward a more perfect expression of love to all people, in all places, at all times. Through growing wisdom, enable us to find ways to help that which makes a difference. Enable us to find ways to demonstrate the way of love through the expression of our own life. We thank you for you abiding presence as we lift our voices in praise. Amen and Amen.

**Tuesday, May 11th, 2021**

**Rev. Taesung Kang, Granite District Superintendent**

**Read 1 John 4:7-21**

We praise you, O God of all seasons, as we look out at our gardens this morning, for you are the Gardener of all plants, the Maker of all breaths, the Source for all that grows; for the vines and branches of the trees remind us of our communal relationship with you; for the depth of your love, through which you sent your Son Jesus into the world so that we may abide with you through Christ; for your constant invitation to share your abounding love with others. Yet we confess that we have failed to abide in love for you and each other. We lift our hearts even if they are filled with hatred, anger, and fear. Forgive us O God for our hypocrisy, when we say, "I love God," yet hate our neighbors. Please prune and take away all that does not reflect the nature of your everlasting love. Cast out all fear and hatred because your perfect love is within us and available to all. Remind us of how Jesus' love changed the world. Love is the only way of living, the only standard for demonstrating Christ. Align our minds with yours, change our hearts so that they may reflect your love. Reform our lives so that we may show love through our actions. May we allow the world to catch a glimpse of God's true nature through the way we abide in love. May we become instruments of your love in a world where hatred is found on every corner. May the people witness our Loving God as we become a truly loving community. May the seed of your love that you have planted within our hearts blossom. May your name be glorified now and forevermore. Amen.

**Wednesday, May 12th, 2021**

**Rev. Dr. Karen Munson, Many Waters District Superintendent**

**Read Acts 8:26-40**

Are we there yet, seeing without understanding on this wilderness road? Are we there yet, to a place where the poor eat and are satisfied, to a time when all the ends of the earth remember and turn to you, to soul space where there is truth in saying, I love you, GOD, because we truly love our siblings, all of them? Not yet. Will you be with us while we are not yet? Will you open our ears to good guides? Will you be with us day after interminable day as, the mutating virus, resistance to risk reduction, and saying no to vaccines slow the journey to full community gathering? Will you walk with us into the wide plains of justice and mercy? Will you plunge us into baptismal waters that we pass along the way? You already are. You already are. You already are. Amen.

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***Thursday, May 13th, 2021***

**Beth DiCocco, Director of Communications**

**Read Psalm 23**

Gracious God, the green pastures and still waters have been places of restoration in these days of distancing, in this dark valley. When I walk amid all you have created, you are with me. You comfort me. You restore my soul. Amen.

***Friday, May 14th, 2021***

**Rev. Dr. Lawrence Jay, Executive Director, Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center**

**Read Psalm 19**

As we prepare to gather remotely or outside for another Sunday worship, O God, it's hard to believe it has been over a year: A year of loss, a year of masks. A year of being distanced from loved ones, a year of community from afar. Yet amid the hurt, the fear, and the separation of this ongoing pandemic, we know that You O LORD are never distant, and though at times it can be so hard to remember, we thank you that you are ever near. As a new day dawns, help us to see you and your love revealed through the little things and the big things in this world, through the glory of the heavens, through the beauty of a flower, through the bread and the cup, and yes, even in the losses, in the masks. May your face be unmasked and revealed as people gather from a distance for worship, as the birds echo our praises in their songs, as creation tells of Your presence. Because everything is connected in a web of assuring love, may your Divine hand weave us into a larger community of praise this day. May your Word remind us that your ways are perfect, even when we do not understand, even as we wonder, "How much longer O God?" Although church from a distance continues, may our hearts today feel your unending Love ever near, may our minds know the truth of your promises, may our hands reach out in divine kindness even across the divide even as you have reached out across the Divine divide to give me strength as we choose to live fully each day for you. This day we declare that You are our God and there shall never be another before You. You are our Christ who came as the power and wisdom of God. You are our Sustainer who is our rock and redeemer, and though this long year of pandemic grows even longer, we praise you for you are Lord of all creation. And it is in your name, we pray and praise, Amen.

***Saturday, May 15th, 2021***

**Hyunkyung Son, M.Div. student**

**Read Romans 4:13-25**

Heavenly Father, how we praise Your name that You have made us a new creation in Christ and have credited us with Your righteousness, by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You that although we were dead in trespasses and sins, You have breathed Your new life in Christ into our body, and made us Your child forever and ever. We have so often tried to please You by the work that we do or the rituals that we have carried out, but we see that there is nothing that we can do that can ever earn Your favor. Thank You that in Christ we have been made righteous by faith. Help us to live to Your praise and glory. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.