October 25 Worship
"Bring A Friend To Church"
Reader- Gary Fleming

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"* Psalm 133:1

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Opening Scripture- Psalm 1(page 465)

Opening Chorus- 395- Be Thou My Vision(vs 1)

Responsive Call To Worship-
Leader: Happy are those who follow the ways of the Lord.
People: God's ways are just and merciful.
Leader: Those who follow God's ways are continually nourished in faith.
People: In all that they do, they prosper.
Leader: Come, let us open our hearts to God's compassionate love.
People: Let us celebrate God's mercy and justice. Amen.

Hymn of Praise- 335- O God, Our Help In Ages Past

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- We thank you, God, for coming to us as a neighbor, a stranger, an immigrant, binding our wounds and carrying us to safety, so that we might love you with all our heart, soul, and mind, and welcome the stranger, loving our neighbor as ourselves. We pray as Jesus taught, saying...*Lord's Prayer...*
"Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end. Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18(page 101)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Matthew 22:34-46(page 857)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 412- Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord

New Testament Scripture- 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8(page 1029)

Message

"A House Divided..."

On June 16, 1858, a candidate for the US Senate gave a speech at a convention and in that speech he made a prediction that would come true in only 3 years. He said; "A house divided cannot stand." He was quoting from Mark 3:25 which says; "And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand," The speaker was Abraham Lincoln and he went on to lose the campaign for Senate but would win the Presidency 3 years later. That speech was about the issue of slavery but could well describe the situation our nation finds itself in today. It is said that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." this quote has been attributed to several sources; writers George Santayana, Edmund Burke, Walter Lipman and Winston Churchill. It doesn't matter who said it first, it is true.

I don't know about you, but I have had about all I can stand of political messages coming from all directions. I know that it is important to be well informed when it comes to the governing of our state and nation but there comes a time when I just want it all to stop and for everyone to take a deep breath and think for a minute. It is so easy to become overwhelmed and want to give up on all the madness. How do we find a way to make it stop? Where can we go to get away from it all? Does anyone want to guess? How do we find unity in the midst of disunity?

The topic of unity is common in Scripture. One of the earliest mentions of individuals being united is in the marriage between a man and a woman. Genesis 2:24 states, "Therefore a man leaves his mother and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." From there, the Bible presents several other manifestations of unity that reveal the heart of God. The New Testament letters written by Paul the apostle are filled with references to unity among Christians. He encourages those in the church to love each other, have a like mind, and share purpose and belief as they experienced persecution and bore the weight of external pressures. One example of Paul's exhortation to unity is Philippians 2:2; "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." It is extremely important that a church be united in purpose and mission.

So, what is the purpose and mission of Ashby Congregational Church? Are we truly united with each other in ways that matter? Let's consider the purpose of our church. Acts 2:42 could be considered a purpose statement for the church: “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” According to this verse, the purposes/activities of the church should be 1) teaching biblical doctrine, 2) providing a place of fellowship for believers, 3) observing the Lord’s supper, and 4) praying. All four of these can be condensed by saying worship and praise of God. The church is to teach biblical doctrine so we can be grounded in our faith. The church is to be a place of fellowship, where Christians can be devoted to one another and honor one another , instruct one another, be kind and compassionate to one another, encourage one another, and most importantly, love one another. The church is to be a place where believers can observe the Lord’s Supper, remembering Christ’s death and shed blood on our behalf. The concept of “breaking bread” also carries the idea of having meals together. This is another example of the church promoting fellowship. The final purpose of the church according scripture is prayer. The church is to be a place that promotes prayer, teaches prayer, and practices prayer. Philippians 4:6-7 encourages us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The mission of the Ashby Congregational Church is spelled out in our Statement of Faith; “We hold it to be the mission of the work of Christ's Church to proclaim His gospel to all mankind, exalting the worship of the one true God and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of His justice, the reign of peace, and the realization of Christian brotherhood.” The church is called to be faithful in sharing the gospel through word and deed. The church is to be a “lighthouse” in the community, pointing people toward our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The church is to both promote the gospel and prepare its members to proclaim the gospel.

It is not easy for a community of people to remain united in a time where we are all pressured to support one or another political party and where certain issues tear apart families or friendships. We need to understand that all of these divisive issues do not matter in God's kingdom. These are issues that are of this world. We are supposed to love each other despite our differences of opinion. This nation was founded on the principles that we have the freedom to believe as we wish. It is OK to have different opinions. It is not OK to deprive another of their right to believe. God has granted us the right to speak our own mind and He

also has granted us the right to be wrong. We must allow each other the same right.

It is necessary for us to have a place where we can leave the noise and pressure of politics behind us. A place where our spirits can be revived and our minds can focus on something besides the conflict of this world. That place is your church and if we are seeking a place where unity is more important than issues, we are in the right place. It is important for us to seek to make this world a better place and church is where we can learn how to act on worldly issues. Being passionate about issues of justice and making a difference is a good thing. Having a place to worship and praise the God who created us is where we can discover the wisdom and strength to make a difference in our world. This is a place where we can learn to work together, despite our differences, and find that we have more in common than we think. Having a safe place where all can gather and find a common purpose is more important than we think. There is power in unity and weakness in division. 1 Peter 3:8-9 tells us; "Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren, a tender heart and a humble mind. Do not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling; but on the contrary bless, for to this you have been called, that you may obtain a blessing." Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People- God of all the world, in prayer You walk us to the highest point of the mountaintop where we are offered an opportunity to view the world as You see it, and the world as You would wish it to be. There is much to be thankful for, for we enjoy opportunities of good health and reasonable living standards; of times of relaxation and times to work; of a roof over our heads, and opportunities to feed our bellies, and our imaginations and the aching of our hearts. From your vantage point we praise You for all that is good for us, and allow You to draw our eyes from our concerns to those of our neighbors, our community, our world. In prayer our eyes are drawn to see those in need of love in our community, and in the church of which we are part. Help us not to be afraid of what is different or unknown to us, but instead willing to offer friendship and accept the opportunities to grow in knowledge and experience. Our eyes are drawn to places of power and leadership as we look for those who govern to offer leadership in difficult times. May those who seek to serve as politicians and leaders of communities find themselves shaped by the words, hopes and ideals of those who place their trust in them. Our eyes are drawn to places of hunger and need. Teach us to share the resources we would covet, and enable us through the activity of Your Holy Spirit

in prayer and with action to be part of a creation where all are treated fairly and all have enough to eat. As You, Lord of vision, draw our eye back to the world of which we are part may our lives be shaped by You to offer others a vision of Your love shown in our faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.
Closing Hymn- 507- Rock Of Ages, Cleft For Me

Benediction- Hear this: the Lord our God is the one and only Lord. Therefore go out into the world and love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love others as you love yourself. And may God give you justice and freedom; May Christ Jesus set you free for love; and may the Holy Spirit go where you go and protect you on your way. We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, In the name of Christ. Amen.