Worship Planning through February 28, 2017

Does not include prayers.

(Ash Wednesday and Lent begins on March 1, 2017)

**Sunday, February 5, 2017**

 **Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – Presentation of Jesus in the Temple**

Reading:

 Luke 2:22-40 – The Message Bible (MSG)

Theme:

Tradition is Good; Not Everything; But Good

There is a sense of honoring the ways that have been instructive and growing from there. In many ways this fits in with our belief that God continues to reveal Godself in the world, and as with Simeon and Anna, with the eyes to see – much is revealed.

Tone:

I am moving in a direction that will build around God/Spirit’s presence around us that sometimes emerges in ways from subtle to stunning. From the gentle kindness of someone’s smile to the breathtaking aspect of nature.

Music:

1. Just a thought…any change of having “Tradition” from *Fiddler on the Roof* at some point as a prelude, postlude or during the offertory?
2. Presentation Hymn – maybe hymn # 585?
3. Communion Hymn

Children’s’ Message:

My plan is to talk about how we gather together in different ways to celebrate different aspects of our lives. How important being together and having a meal with one another can be. How we are coming together today to share a meal that reminds us of Jesus’ teachings in our lives and the way we “be” with one another.

Call to Worship:

 We gather together to ask for God’s blessing,

 to live in community, seeking God’s will.

 Come, let us join with one another in song and prayer

 as we worship God who is with us always.

Unison Prayer:

 Look upon us with your love, Creator God.

 Fill us with the strength that dispels any doubt

 of what we can do in your midst.

 Bring us today to a table that nourishes us with courage and compassion,

 and fill us with your enthusiasm for Justice and Love

 in all the ways you call us.

Assurance of Pardon:

 Friends we are blessed with God’s peace to be assured of God’s love and forgiveness, so that we may embrace others even in the midst of challenge and uncertainty. For this we have been pardoned and called to share. Amen.

Luke 2:22-40 – The Message Bible (MSG)

Then when the days stipulated by Moses for purification were complete, they took him up to Jerusalem to offer him to God as commanded in God’s Law: “Every male who opens the womb shall be a holy offering to God,” and also to sacrifice the “pair of doves or two young pigeons” prescribed in God’s Law.

In Jerusalem at the time, there was a man, Simeon by name, a good man, a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel. And the Holy Spirit was on him. The Holy Spirit had shown him that he would see the Messiah of God before he died. Led by the Spirit, he entered the Temple. As the parents of the child Jesus brought him in to carry out the rituals of the Law, Simeon took him into his arms and blessed God:

God, you can now release your servant;
    release me in peace as you promised.
With my own eyes I’ve seen your salvation;
    it’s now out in the open for everyone to see:
A God-revealing light to the non-Jewish nations,
    and of glory for your people Israel.

Jesus’ father and mother were speechless with surprise at these words. Simeon went on to bless them, and said to Mary his mother,

This child marks both the failure and
    the recovery of many in Israel,
A figure misunderstood and contradicted—
    the pain of a sword-thrust through you—
But the rejection will force honesty,
    as God reveals who they really are.

Anna the prophetess was also there, a daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher. She was by now a very old woman. She had been married seven years and a widow for eighty-four. She never left the Temple area, worshiping night and day with her fastings and prayers. At the very time Simeon was praying, she showed up, broke into an anthem of praise to God, and talked about the child to all who were waiting expectantly for the freeing of Jerusalem.

When they finished everything required by God in the Law, they returned to Galilee and their own town, Nazareth. There the child grew strong in body and wise in spirit. And the grace of God was on him.

**Sunday, February 12, 2017 – Sixth Sunday after Epiphany**

Reading:

 Matthew 5:21-26 – NRSV

Theme:

Anger is a costly luxury

The theme of forgiveness will be central to my comments. This is a shortened relevant version of the full text. The theme of wide journeys from resentment to forgiveness, the release of anger – is all of a higher order centered in God’s Love.

Music:

Ideas: I’ve Got Peace Like a River (478 NCH)

The Water is Wide, James Taylor - see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opfEk_Yoksk>

Matthew 5:21-16 – New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

**Sunday, February 19, 2017 – Seventh Sunday after Epiphany**

Reading:

 Matthew 5:38-48 – The Message Bible (MSG)

Theme:

Finding the Love Path

The gospel is very challenging, again. “Do not resist evil, turn the other cheek, go the extra mile…” doesn’t translate well or safely into the complex world we have inherited and continue to design – or does it? Ultimately, it is about a way, a path to falling in love as a world…starting in our relationships with one another.

Music:

Ideas: Brother Can You Spare a Dime, George Michael Version

 (Maybe as an instrumental for prelude, postlude, offertory)

 Or it would be a solo, if someone was so inclined.

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ij3ba71gtrU>

Matthew 5:38-48 – The Message (MSG)

 “Here’s another old saying that deserves a second look: ‘Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.’ Is that going to get us anywhere? Here’s what I propose: ‘Don’t hit back at all.’ If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.

“You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

“In a word, what I’m saying is, *Grow up*. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”

**Sunday, February 26, 2017 – Transfiguration Sunday**

Reading:

 Matthew 17:1-9

Theme:

Visions of the Heart

What happens when we “see” God in the transfiguration of those and the world around us. When conditions change in dramatic ways, do we see what is unfolding in God’s time – or do we dismiss it in “our time.”

Music:

Ideas: I Can See Clearly Now, Johnny Nash

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FscIgtDJFXg>

 Feeling Good, Nina Simone

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5Y11hwjMNs>

Matthew 17:1-9 – NRSV

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

 “In a word, what I’m saying is, *Grow up*. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”