

## **“A Lent of Joy”**

Linda Gooley (Presiding over worship)

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Well, here we are again. Taking care of ourselves. I think we have become quite good at it and it is important that we are, so that we can continue the work of this faith community. I was charged with the task of taking care of the worship service for 3 possibly 4 Sundays and again this wonderful community stepped up. Like Rich Brown told you last week I am here today. Next week, March 17, Pastor Barb will be back but the following week, March 24, Judy Neilson our inspiring organist will be up here with to give us some words of wisdom. The week after that, March 31, Pastor Barb will be here again which will be her last day with us. Virginia Schiefelbein stepped up not only to do our beautiful Ash Wednesday service this past week but she will also be back for the Communion Service on April 7. Our new wonderful choir director Brandon Frost is putting together a Taizé service for Maundy Thursday and Pastor Ruth Fitzgerald will be here for both Palm Sunday and Easter. After that I have no idea but I'm sure it will be a good adventure. I for one always look forward to new ideas from other people so being able to listen to Judy and Virginia again for me is a real treat. And since I have never heard Pastor Ruth preach a Sunday service I am really looking forward to that also. I going to say it again. You all are simply wonderful. But I think the best thing that you all do is that you keep showing up on Sunday mornings with your smiles and support that show all of us the Christ within us all. Can you feel it when you come into this church? Can you feel the love and support? I can.

Last time I had a chance to speak with you we talked about the fact that our job here on earth is to be happy. We talked about keeping negativity out of our lives. We talked about being joyful and we made up the word '*lightful*'. And we talked about practicing being joyful and '*lightful*'. So I guess my question to you is have you been practicing? I think maybe you have whether you know it or not. I think this group as a whole just automatically knows how to be joyful most of the time.

Lent, however for some people, can be a little trying. Not only is it a time to put away the Alleluias for a time of repentance, but because of the long winter, this really long, icy, cold winter it can feel like doom and gloom. But Lent shouldn't rob our joy. Nothing about our religion should make us feel bad or sad or depressed. God is joy no matter what the season. God is joy no matter what the situation. Lent can also be a time when past problems or things in our past that weren't so nice come looming into our thoughts. Unfortunately, we can't unlive things that happened to us in our past. And for me there is absolutely no point in talking about those things that make us unhappy or sad because that just makes us unhappy and sad. Lots of people, credible people that are trying to help say you have to deal with your problems and talk about them. Join a support group, see a therapist. Well, nope, I'm not going to do because that just feels like dwelling on the things I'm trying not to think about. Because you get what you think about! Unfortunately, we don't always want to get what we think about. If you think about being sick you are probably going to be sick. If you think about how depressed you are, you are going to be depressed!

For me, I have a million triggers I guess you call them, that send me back to when Jason transitioned. Because our congregation has changed a bit since then I'll tell you a little bit about Jason. Jason was our first born son. He was the reason we moved to Lansing in 2005. We came to help take care of Maddy, their newborn daughter. Long story short. He was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2009. After many rounds of chemo, radiation and many surgeries and some trips to MD Anderson in Texas he transitioned back to non-physical on Dec 9, 2014. Maddy was 9 years old at the time. So even the number 9 or many, many other little things and not so little things can shoot my mind back to those last days and fill me with a total feeling of panic and grief to the point of dissolving into huge sobs, still, even last week. The fact that his birthday is March 11, which is tomorrow and it frequently occurs during Lent is also difficult. Yesterday our family and his friends met at the cemetery for his birthday. You can imagine how uplifting that was. But really it was. 34 of his family and friends gathered around his

marker that says Jason Todd Gooley March 11, 1977 - December 9, 2014. How awesome it was that on his fifth birthday since he transitioned his family and friends are still gathering to celebrate what would have been his 42nd birthday. Focusing only on that first date, March 11, 1977 one of the happiest days of my life. So, if I had the choice of having him for only 37 years 8 months and 27 days or not ever having him at all, I'll take having him for that short time. I am grateful that we had him and wouldn't trade having him for the world. So being able to still celebrate his birthday, well, while it isn't in a way that I would like, still, it helps me feel connected to him and I won't let the fact that he isn't here physically taint that beautiful, wonderful day that he was born.

But those things that take me back to his last days that have so many terrible memories isn't something that I want to think or talk about because no amount of talking about it is going to make me feel any better. It just isn't. But the minute those icky memories come back and I say I'm not going to think about that, then of course, that's all I think about. Do you ever notice that? The more you try to not think about something the more it creeps into your thoughts. So the way I deal with those awful times is by redirecting my thoughts away from the awful thoughts by thinking of something that "triggers", so to speak, a happier thought. In other words, find a better feeling thought. Letting my inner being or my feelings of Christ within me align with who I really am, a happy, joyful, fulfilled person. Every one of us is truly a happy, joyful person. Being in tune with that inner light or your inner being or your Christ light or whatever you want to call it, is the key. You can't be in tune with your inner being and be unhappy because your inner being is always happy. Jesus was so in tune with his inner being that he could heal people. I heard Abraham say once that the reason Jesus could heal was because his knowledge of their wellness was so dominate, that their illness could not exist in his vibration. He refused to see the illness. He refused to not see perfection. He practiced shinning His light with only positive thoughts that kept him vibrating at a very high level where there could be no illness in his presence. Then Jesus said go forth and tell no-one because he knew if they went home and talked about the way they were before he healed them they would get talked back into where ever they were before they were healed. So don't talk about it! You get what you think or talk about. A belief is just something that you keep on thinking. Sooo guess what. You get what you believe or think or talk about!

For years the practice during Lent has been to give up something that you love to replicate Jesus's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days. But the last several years we have been hearing a different take on Lent. We have heard instead of giving up something, to do something positive. This year I'm suggesting that perhaps we take this a step further. Here it comes, that practicing thing again. We've talked about practicing keeping joy in our life and making us feel lighter. Lent is the perfect time to practice that living in the light. And not dwell on the negative. Instead of giving up something, I'm suggesting that we do something positive like working on letting that light shine not just within but also without. It is so important to have that lighter feeling in us because we aren't any good to anyone, ourselves included, if we are all doom and gloom. It's same rational as when you are in an airplane and the oxygen masks come down you need to put yours on first before you tend to your children because you are no good to them if you are passed out yourself. So this Lent I'm suggesting that we try to take care of ourselves in order to be there for others.

Just as Jesus was tested in the wilderness, Lent is our test. Our test to see if we can stay in the light and not listen to the darkness. Because that darkness cannot overpower the light. Well, about that finding a better feeling thought when you start feeling down, how about a better feeling rampage. I have made a list that I can carry around with me so in case I start feeling blue or overwhelmed I can pull it out and use it to find that better feeling thought. Sometimes it's best when those demon thoughts creep in to just think about general positive things like reflecting how you want things to be or on things that you just love. So I'm going to end this with an example of a rampage to help you move from those darn icky thoughts that can sometimes creep in and give that poor me feeling.

So here is my rampage of joy for Lent

This a good day.

This is a really good day

Today a new beginning

This is me being aware of how I feel physically

This is me being aware of how I feel emotionally

I love seeing the sun on new fallen snow looking all glittery.

I love that spring is just around the corner.

I love a warm spring day when the leaves are just coming out on the trees.

I love doing jigsaw puzzles

I love curling up with a good book. Lately by Pastor Barb

I love the smell of baking bread

I love that I can still play tennis even if it is Wii tennis in the winter

I love walking around my yard and seeing all my favorite plants

Are you feeling lighter?

I love seeing the birds make their nests

I love holding a new born baby

I love seeing the herd of deer in our backyard

I love feeding our koi in our pond

I love that we named all of our koi

I love being able to check off each koi as we see them

I love sitting on my deck and playing a game.

I love the taste of ice cream.

I love going out for dinner

I love that we moved to Lansing

I love that we live in the country

I love that we have chickens running around on our driveway

I love seeing the calves every day when I drive down our driveway

**I love my family,**

I love my husband and Mary Lou and that we all get to live together

I love that I still have my mother, all of her 91 years

I love that our son Josh calls me almost every day

I love when our son Seth and his family spend the night with us when they come to visit

I love our family gatherings

I love watching the kids playing in the sand on the beach

I love watching them playing in the pond

I love that we got to take care of Maddy when she was little

I love playing with my grandchildren

I love that we have 4 grandchildren, Maddy, Hayden, Dash and Hazel.

I love that we get to take care of Dash once in a while

I love how Dash makes me laugh

I love when Hazel crawls into my lap

I love being able to take Maddy and Hayden to the MSU science fair.

I love that I get to belong to this church,

I love that I can sing in the choir,

I love that I occasionally get to direct the choir

I love that I can ring in the bell choir.

I love that I belong to a church that allows me to get up here once in a while and share ideas with you all.  
And I love all of you.  
Now that's a rampage to defeat gloom.  
There is great love here for us all.  
Amen