

CELEBRATE GOD'S LOVE HERE!

LOVE ALL AND SERVE ALL.

Scripture:

Psalm 145:1-8

¹I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. ²Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever. ³Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

⁴One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. ⁵On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. ⁶The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness. ⁷They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

⁸The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The book of Jonah is just four chapters long. Before this Jonah 3 passage, Jonah has tried to disobey God by boarding a ship headed the opposite direction from Nineveh, where God has called him to prophesy. He ended up in the belly of a big fish and survived three days there until he was vomited up onto the shores of Nineveh. Then Jonah obeyed God and prophesied and the Ninevites repented and started behaving righteously.

Jonah 3:10-4:11

¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

^{4:1}But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ²He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. ³And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

⁹But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." ¹⁰Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



Jonah had quite the impertinent personality, didn't he! Of all the Biblical stories, even those who don't know the Old Testament well usually know at least something about Jonah.

Here are a couple of things you might not know about him. Did you know Jesus tells his disciples that he will experience something similar to Jonah?

(Matthew 12:40 says, For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.)

JONAH IN THE QURAN

Did you know the story of Jonah is repeated in the Quran? The Quran sums up the lesson like this: "The story of Prophet Jonah teaches us to have patience, especially in the face of adversity. It teaches us to remember God in the good times and the bad. It teaches us to remember God in this life so that God will remember us when we die. If we remember God when we are young God will remember us when we are old and if we remember God when we are healthy God will remember us when we are sick, sad, or tired. Distress

can be relieved only, by turning to God with sincerity.”
Good teachings!

<https://www.islamreligion.com/articles/2548/prophet-jonah/>

JONAH'S RESPONSE

Jonah's response is puzzling. Most prophets would have been rejoicing because the people they prophesized to had listened. So why was Jonah not happy about God sparing the city of Nineveh? At that time Nineveh was the heart of the Assyrian empire which caused death and destruction to Israel. Nineveh was the "most hated" city of the Israelites because the rulers were ruthless and cruel to the Jewish nation.

Jonah was to warn and forgive people on behalf of God - people who he thought were hopeless depraved killers. This would be a challenging assignment to all of us wouldn't it?

The key foundation missing in Jonah's prophetic work was trust in God, trust and servant leadership.

FREDERICK BUECHNER'S THOUGHTS ON JONAH

According to theologian and author Frederick Buechner, "Within a few minutes of swallowing the prophet Jonah, the whale suffered a severe attack of acid indigestion, and it's not hard to see why. Jonah had a disposition that was enough to curdle milk. ---- When God ordered him to go to Nineveh and tell them there to shape up and repent from their wicked ways, Jonah basically went into shock.

"In the first place, the Ninevites were foreigners and thus in his mind they were not his responsibility. He was a prophet to the Jews. In the second place, far from wanting to see them get saved from destroying themselves, nothing would have pleased him more than to see them get what he thought they had coming to them.

In a desperate attempt to get himself out of the assignment to Nineveh, he got himself swallowed by the whale instead; but the whale couldn't stomach him for long, and in the end Jonah went ahead, and with a little more prodding from God, he did what he'd been commanded.

"He hated every minute of it, however, and when the Ninevites succumbed to God's commands and they promised to shape up, Jonah was deeply disappointed. He sat down in the hot sun hoping to die. But our forgiving caring God created a plant to shade him. Then after Jonah got accustomed to the shade, God caused the plant to shrivel up to the last leaf. When Jonah got all upset at being back in the ghastly heat again, God pretended to misunderstand what was bugging him.

"Here you are, all upset out of pity for one small plant that has shriveled up," he said, "so what's wrong with having pity for this whole place that's headed for Hell in a handbasket if someone doesn't help them see

the way they were meant to be in this world?" (Jonah 4:10-11).

Jonah was a great prophet (some Biblical scholars say he was much more successful in getting people to listen to him than Jeremiah, and Ezekiel because he saved over one-hundred-thousand people from self-destruction in one day, but he wasn't such a great leader.

LEADERSHIP

Great leaders have certain characteristics and Jonah was missing many of these. He lacked empathy, humility, integrity, moral fortitude, wisdom, and patience. One thing he did have was resilience. Anyone who can survive three days in the belly of a whale is resilient.

In my Leadership Santa Rosa continuing education, we discuss different styles of leadership and which style we tend to use the most.

After taking a long survey that measured leadership style it concluded that the majority of the time, I am "people-oriented and transformational." But one of the members of my small group (who also works for a non-profit), said she was disappointed when her results showed she had a "servant leadership" style. I told her I was hoping for that result! Jesus modeled for us effective servant leadership, leading by doing.

I see Jesus here every day when I watch and work with the Deacons and the chairs of our Session committees who are strong servant leaders. Without them and all their committee members, Church of the Roses would be in terrible shape. God has blessed us with awesome servant leaders. I want to introduce these great role models to you. (No clapping please.)

Steve Fenner, our **Buildings and Grounds** chair, just returned from a long trip overseas, but he was here last Tuesday, in our parking lot, mask on his face, blowing up lots of dirt and leaves so our parking lot is clutter free. All of our Buildings and Grounds men and women work long hours on Tuesdays and other days doing all they can to share their gifts and talents with this church so that we don't have to spend money on garden cleanup and building repairs. The Buildings and Grounds crew are our modern day miracle workers that save our church about \$60,000.00 a year with their free maintenance and gardening skills. Please stand if you are currently on the Buildings and Grounds Committee.

Faithful servant leader, **Bill Morgan** is our **Membership Committee** chairperson who inspires his committee to creatively explore ways to help people feel comfortable and welcome in our church. His committee keeps track of all the church family members and works with the Deacons to find out why some members are no

longer coming to church so we can provide support. The Membership Committee develops events like the Spring Fling in partnership with the Fellowship Committee every year. They host the inquirers classes and have inspired sixty new members to join our church family in the past four years. Along with his wife, Nancy, Bill also represents our church in outside the church activities like the Pedal for Protein ride they just completed yesterday. Please stand if you're on the Membership Committee.

Kay Young is our **Worship Committee** chair and our **Stephen Ministry** leader. Besides singing in the choir and bell-ringing and being our backup piano accompanist, Kay chairs the group that helps Barbara and me plan all the worship services and guides our debriefing about how well we did with the worship services in the past. Kay and her committee are skilled at decorating the church for all the seasons and they are always willing to try new things in worship like passing of the peace. They have also been very supportive of the creation of new worship services, like Sacred Space and the Friday Vespers services. Her committee makes sure there are ushers, flowers, and communion servers and greeters for the services Sunday after Sunday. Worship Committee members including sound, audio and projection and Stephen Ministers please stand.

Chris Rhodes is our **Youth Council** leader who supports Eddie Seamans' role as our Director of Youth Activities, and Chris is the coordinator for our **Montgomery High School Breakfast Program**. Chris is a commissioned lay pastor/ruling elder and our backup preacher when Cassie and I are away. Chris also helps with the leadership of the service and learning trips and he too represented our church in the Pedal for Protein fundraising ride. I am so grateful for humble quiet and wise leaders like Chris who are content to lead behind the scenes with a strong devotion to the church. Will the Youth Council members who help Eddie coordinate the youth activities stand.

Jonathan Steele has been the chair of the **Church and World Committee** ever since I came here four years ago. Jonathan leads a compassionate group of folks in discerning the development of our mission programs as we seek to serve inside and outside the church wherever there is need. The Church and World Committee disperses funds but also organizes hands-on service that we can do locally and regionally in order to give of ourselves in tangible ways. Servant leadership requires having a sense of humor. Thanks to Jonathan's big laugh, our meetings always include a lot of laughter despite the serious decisions we make. Church and World Committee please stand.

Jim Taylor is a servant leader for our church staff as the chair of our **Personnel Committee** which helps to make sure we are supported financially (within the

pledged budget). The Personnel Committee provides advocacy support as well. Jim is very busy working with a lot of staff at Hansel, but he still finds a way to lead our monthly Personnel meetings as our main Human Resources elder. Jim and the committee helped hire five of our current wonderful staff: Barbara McElroy, Althea Wright, Jami Knuthson, Ruth Canniff, Cassie Carroll, Eddie Seamans, Nancy Morgan and Chelsea Howard. We are all grateful for Jim and the whole committee's support. Will the Personnel Committee please stand.

Chris Nelle is our **Finance and Stewardship** chair. Chris' faith in God and his finance management expertise is very helpful. Chris accepted his role as Finance Committee chair even though the idea of church members pledging funds to a faith-based budget was a foreign concept. Thank you, Chris for your faith in us and in our efforts to keep this church financially sustained for the benefit of our whole community and for future generations. Will the rest of the Finance and Stewardship Committee please stand.

Deborah Baker is not only our **Fellowship Committee** chairperson who makes sure we have snacks and delicious meals ready and served in our church in big and small ways, but she is also a leader nationally as a geriatric nurse practitioner. Deborah has the important leadership qualities of patience, organizing, and a love for both people and food that are requirements to be a Fellowship chairperson. She also leads our **Roses Health Ministry** along with Christie Page, Ann Wong, Felipa Jones, Dr. Yee, and Valerie Petersen who work hard to help keep us healthy in body, mind, and spirit. Will all the Fellowship Committee and the Health Ministry Committee please stand.

Tony Burille jumped back into church life whole heartedly these past few years and now he role models what resilient and hardworking church leadership looks like in action. Tony decided it was the right time in his life to share all the wisdom and deep faith he has acquired over the years as our chair of **Adult Christian Education Committee**. Tony has so much heart and devotion. If you are not attending the Bible Study video classes led by Nita Pinney on Mondays and Tony on Wednesdays, you are missing out on a free high quality comprehensive theological and church history education. Will all the Adult Education Committee members please stand.

Diane Osten is the leader of the **Children's Department of the Christian Education Committee**. She also represented our church in the Pedal for Protein ride this year! Diane's email is called petmom because she shelters dogs and cats and little people under her wings for protection and education. Diane helps Chelsea Howard coordinate the Sunday School classes on Sundays and leads the summertime Vacation Church School as well. Diane has been in this church almost

since she was born and you would think she would get tired of giving giving giving since she has been a teacher many many years in the school system as well. But thank goodness her energizer batteries are still going and Diane is still very willing to focus her energies on our church. Will all the Children's Christian Education Committee please stand.

Dave Nelson is the elder servant leader of the **Nominating Committee**. This group meets behind the scenes, sometimes weekly until they get a full slate of new Deacons and Elders in line ready to replace the outgoing church officers. We have eighteen Deacons and twelve Elders so there are usually at least eight or more new leadership positions to fill each year. Dave and the Nominating Committee review who is eligible to become church officers based on church attendance and faithful devotion to the church. Then they recruit people who they believe would be willing and able leaders for our Session and the Board of Deacons. They work to be sure all church members who participate regularly are given a fair chance to lead. Will the rest of the Nominating Committee please stand.

Alice Crouch, our beloved **Clerk of Session**, has devoted most of her life to Presbyterian mission work with her late husband, the Reverend Ted Crouch, for over fifty years of their life together. Now she devotes her life to co-partnering with our church in documenting all of our Session meetings for the history of the church. Alice is another quiet but strong leader who makes sure I am not forgetting something we are scheduled to do for the church year or keeps things "decently and in order" as she takes our Session minutes and keeps us on track at meetings. Alice is like a shepherding guardian angel of our church and she also participates with Presbyterian Women and with our Presbytery of the Redwoods on our behalf.

Now you can clap!

BEING AN EFFECTIVE CHURCH LEADER

To be an effective leader in the church you must keep your eyes upon Jesus as your role model and your trust in God while working with imperfect humans.

That is the other great lesson in the story of Jonah. Jonah wasn't perfect, but God didn't give up on him despite his impertinent attitude.

God eventually found a way to motivate Jonah to participate in his wonderful redemptive and transformative work with the people of the city of Nineveh who God deemed worth saving, because *all* people are worth saving, even those who at first might seem to be our enemies.

If you don't already, we hope you will join these amazing leaders in God's work and participate in the wonderful ministries that God is leading us to develop here at Church of the Roses.

Jonah's story was commemorated by Louis Armstrong in his album of songs about stories from *The Good Book*. He says the lesson we learn from Jonah is: "When you hear the call, don't you turn the Gospel down." So if you get a call from the Nominating Committee don't turn it down!

A video of Louis Armstrong was played for the congregation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSwbNvJn714>

Benediction:

Whatever you do to help our church financially, or physically or both, you are spreading the Gospel, the Good news that God is love. We are all very grateful!

Please consider joining one of our committees or helping with one of their projects by signing up at the tables in Bowen Hall during the coffee hour.

The Elders will be there to answer any of your questions.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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