

# Waitsfield United Church of Christ

January 7, 2024 - 10:00 a.m.

## Epiphany Sunday

*Living, serving and walking by faith for the benefit of the local and global community. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.*

### Welcome to Worship at the WUCC Village Meeting House

Please feel free to greet one another before the worship service.

### Words of Welcome and Announcements

#### Prelude

“Uno, dos, tres, quatro”

Melody Bober

Amelia Allen, Sally Kendall, and Dorothy Peck - 6-Hand Piano

Dorothy's Note: Over the years, sharing worship music with Amelia and Sally has been such a joy! They have learned the “ins and outs” of playing the Allen organ, and together we have offered preludes and postludes that have included organ and piano duets or 4-hand piano selections. Today, in our latest adventure, a 6-hand piano prelude was a wild ride learning how to accomplish 6 hands playing together! What fun!!! Our keyboard playing and music interpretation styles are very similar which allows for an almost seamless learning of challenging music. This morning's Prelude is our gift to God.

#### Call to Worship

One: Morning has broken, like the first morning! Come, people of God, to the One in whom we trust.

*Many: Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning! Let us open ourselves to the one who knows us well.*

One: Yours is the sunlight! Yours is the morning! God accepts us; God affirms us.

*Many: Praise with elation; praise every morning. God's Word of love is ours to proclaim.*

One: God's recreation of the new day!

*All: We are here to worship God, who recreates all.*

**\*Invocation (Unison)**

**Jesus, we know who you are: the Holy One of God. Thank you for calling us to be with you, and for your healing presence in our lives, and in our worship. Together or apart, we are always united in your Spirit, and for this, we gather to give you thanks and to offer you our praise. Amen.**

**Anthem**

**“Pray for the People”**

**Pepper Choplin**

**Choir’s Trip Down Memory Lane:**

From 2018: As this anthem gentle rocks us into a contemplative, prayerful place, we are reminded to pray for others. Prayer is the foundation of our faith and something always happens when we pray (even though we may not see it). One of our favorite composers, Pepper Choplin, captures the heart of prayer in the lyrics. Listen closely because near the end he changes the words from “pray for the people ...” to “pray for them and as you do, people all around are praying for you,” a phrase that emotionally captures the Choir each time they sing it. Every day, we pray for the people.

**Storytime**

**“The Goodbye Book”**

**by Todd Parr**

**Prayers**

**Sharing of Joys and Concerns**

**Silent Prayer**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

**Our Father/Mother/Creator, 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

## **Prayer of Dedication (Unison)**

**Great Giver, what we have been given by you, we freely offer back in service to you. Bless these gifts and send them into the world in your calling and healing Spirit. Amen.**

## **Scripture Lesson**

**Mark 1:16-34**

**Read by Susan Klein**

## **Anthem**

**“10,000 Reasons”**

**Myrin/Redman**

**Choir’s Trip Down Memory Lane:**

*Picture this:* Dorothy listening to this anthem on a demo CD, pressing “Replay” over and over and over, wondering if she could teach this music to the Choir and if she could learn to play the piano part. She loved the melody, the words, the deep spiritual message and yet, could we do it? With hours of work and a Choir that loves it as much as she does, this anthem was first presented for worship in 2015 and will remain a favorite forever.

## **Order for the Ending of A Ministry**

**from the UCC Book of Worship**

**The Conclusion of the Ministry of Dorothy Peck**

## **Anointing with Oil**

## **The Laying On of Hands**

## **The Last Supper**

**“Feed the People”**

**The Pastor sings:** *The gifts of God for the people of God.  
Come, now, for all is prepared.*

**The Congregation responds:**

*The gifts of God for the people of God.  
The Gospel is among us.*

## **Prayer of Thanksgiving (unison)**

**Revealing God, shine in our hearts through the Light of Christ that we may be signs of your presence on earth: making peace, doing justice, loving neighbor and enemy, and praising you. Amen.**

**\*Closing Hymn**

“Here I Am Lord”

**No. 452**

**\*Benediction**

*After the Benediction, please be seated for the postlude.*

**Postlude**

“The Lost Chord”

Sir Arthur Sullivan

Dorothy’s Note: From my perspective, this song is just plain **fun** to play and, for me, it also comes with a Church family story: In the 1980s, Emily Eaton (the 95+ year old former Waitsfield town clerk) would often tell me after worship how much she liked the way I played the hymns because I didn’t drag them!! I became aware that “The Lost Chord” was her favorite song, and though I couldn’t play it at that point in my career, I never forgot. Many years later I purchased the music, learned it, and along the way I also discovered that it was Jan Barnard’s (Pam’s mother) favorite too. I surprised Jan with an invitation one Sunday morning to sit on the organ bench with me while I played it as a birthday gift for her ~ a very special moment in time. This morning, I play my closing organ postlude in loving memory of Jan Barnard and Emily Eaton.

**\*Please stand as you are able.**

**Waitsfield United Church of Christ**

**Village Meeting House**

**P.O. Box 16; 4355 Main Street**

**Waitsfield, VT 05673**

**[www.waitsfieldchurch.org](http://www.waitsfieldchurch.org)/Telephone 496-3065**

**Church Staff**

**Minister, Rev. Mark D. Wilson**

**Director of Music, Dorothy Peck**

## Prayer list from 12/24 and 12/31:

### Joys

Peter (and Mark, and so say we all) are grateful for Trish, her presence, and her ministry among us here - today grateful for her Spanish translation skills!

Pat continues to be grateful for healing, and for all of those supporting her in so many ways.

Susan K. lifts up Lisa Parro's help in singing tonight.

Lisa is grateful for her daughter coming to visit, and for all family visits.

Trish is grateful for the many services being held today.

### Concerns Ongoing

On going healing for Mary Nell, Cindy, Huguette, Doug, Suzan, Barbara and Debbie, Nancy, Mary Ann, Tammy, and Rose.

Amy J. holds all those who cannot be with loved ones in her prayers this Christmas.

Cheryl prays for all those coming to their first Christmas without their spouses or other loved ones.

Beki prays for Sharon, traveling in so many ways.

Suzan continues to pray for healing for her sister, Nancy.

Karen lifts up her husband, Chris, getting a new hip on Wednesday.

For all those for whom the holidays are complicated, at best.

Susan B. asks for traveling mercies for all who travel this holiday.

For Pat's loved one, Eric, who will be taken off life support.

For Jada M. upon the passing of her father, Adrian.

For the loved ones of Ginny Roth, who recently passed.

For Bill, entering his final days.

Susan prays for Sabrina and her boyfriend, traveling again.

For Dorothy, as she enters her last week here at the church after 40 years of faithful service.

For peace as we approach a New Year.

We also pray for those whose names are written on our hearts.

## Announcements

**Worship is over, our service now begins . . .**

**The Zoom link to our Sunday at 10 a.m. worship service is:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4355187516?pwd=K016Y3BLczNrQlk2WEN-TQW1UcDBFZz09> Meeting ID: 435 518 7516; Passcode: VMH2021

**Offering Plates** are just inside the sanctuary doors. We do not take an offering during worship, so thanks for offering what you can, when you can.

**After worship, all are welcome to a reception**, held downstairs in the Village Meeting House, honoring Dorothy Peck's ministry at this church. There will be a time for sharing memories and stories of Dorothy during the reception.

**For the next two Sundays** - January 14 and 21 - to honor Dorothy's long tenure with us, and to let the music pieces of our worship rest before starting up again in anticipation of the arrival of our new Music Director, **there will be no music during worship**. Rev. Mark is working with the Music Search Committee and the Choir to have music ready for worship again starting January 28.

**Annual Reports are due** next Sunday, January 14 to Karen Nevin.

**Alec McCowen's Performance of The Gospel of Mark offered in two halves and two wholes . . .**

In 1977, British Actor Alec McCowen gave his first performance of the Gospel of Mark: in its entirety, and from memory. The desire to hear the work grew from there until, in 1979, after performing Mark's Gospel on Broadway, he was nominated for a Tony Award. In 1990, a revival of the performance was taped and it is that performance that will be shown the next two Sundays after worship, in two roughly even, 50-minute long parts.

But because it's better if you do it all at once, I'll also offer it at least two other times: Thursday, January 18, from Noon - 2 p.m.; and Monday, January 29, from 6 - 8 p.m.

**Our new children's area at the back of the sanctuary** is ready to welcome kids of all ages to lounge, read, draw and play right alongside us as we worship. Our hope is to welcome families by creating a sense that children are embraced here, as beloved members of the church — and with all the noises and wiggles and joy they bring. Please note that while childcare is not available, the downstairs

playroom (or "cry room", depending on your needs) remains stocked with toys, books, and comfy couches for anyone needing a break. We ask that children be accompanied by a parent or caregiver in this space, which features a speaker so that you can tune into the service upstairs.

**Loads of Love:** Every Wednesday from 4 - 6, we support our neighbors at the Waitsfield Laundromat by providing quarters for their laundry. It's free for anyone who comes in and it gives us an opportunity to meet folks in our community. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Diane Thompson at [red3@gmavt.net](mailto:red3@gmavt.net). You may also sign up for Loads of Love here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e054aa8af2fa0fe3-waitsfield3#> Thank you!

**This morning we give thanks for:**

Our In-House Deacon, Diane Thompson

Our Digital Deacon, Trish McBride

Thanks to all who helped out at the reception for Dorothy after worship today!

If you would like to give to the church electronically, you may do so by going here: <https://www.waitsfieldchurch.org/give>

**Thanks to those folks who are volunteering to be Digital Deacons, In-house Deacons, and Coffee Hour providers.** To sign up for a particular Sunday, there's a place to do that:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e054aa8af2fa0fe3-waitsfield1>

**Our Pastor, Mark Wilson** works Sunday through Thursday. You may reach him by email [revmarkdwilson@gmail.com](mailto:revmarkdwilson@gmail.com) or at the church (802-496-3065), or, if it is an emergency, on his cell phone (802-522-8922).

## Notes on the Text     Mark 1:16-34

Can a carpenter and a bunch of fishermen change the world? What do you think?

The Jordan River flows from mountains in Lebanon into the Sea of Galilee (which is actually just a good-sized lake), then down to the Dead Sea. Andrew and Simon Peter are poorer fishermen, throwing nets from shore, while James and John are a bit more well-to-do because they have hired help.

Jesus doesn't go to the Temple, to Jerusalem, to the Priests, to the scholars, to announce God's liberating reign - nope - he goes to fishermen out in the sticks, in Galilee, in the NEK. Fishing, at the time, wasn't a free market system, any more than it is now. The sea and its fish belonged to Caesar. In some places in the Bible, the sea is actually called the Sea of Tiberius (Caesar). If you wanted Caesar's permission to fish, you had to pay him for a permit. And yes, there were middlemen all up and down the chain, same as now. The idea of fishing for people wouldn't have made sense to them, though it may be Jesus *has* in mind Jeremiah 16:16: "to catch all those who are cast out by God."

Capernaum, on the north end of the Sea of Galilee, was the center of Jesus's activity. Galilee itself is the name for the province under the governance of Herod Antipas on the west side of the Sea. Jesus is said to teach as one who had authority, and not like the scribes. Well, the irony here of course is that the scribes of the Jewish people were part of the group who had authority at that time (or as much authority as the Romans would let them have). They were literate, scholar-lawyer types who represented the Jerusalem priests. Note that the demons know who Jesus is, the people get an inkling Jesus is special, but the scribes don't get it. A man with an unclean spirit would not have been allowed into the synagogue, so the demon must already have been within him, waiting to come out.

"Jesus realizes that the crowds are coming because they want miracles. He, on the other hand, wants crowds to come to hear the gospel he will preach, yet he still performs miracles. The demons seem to know who he is and what he is about, while his followers and the crowds he attracts misunderstand him and his mission. Everything in this episode is complicated."

- Dianne Bergant, Prof. of Old Testament, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago

Then they go to Peter's house, where Peter's mother-in-law is down with a fever. You can see the remains of that house even today in Capernaum. The fact



that Peter has a mother-in-law tells you what? That Peter is married. Yes. Yes, he was. How strange, then, that a church built on a celibate priesthood began with a married man.

A lot of ink has been spilled on Peter's mother-in-law: just one more woman who, as soon as she is well again, has to go right back into the kitchen to make supper! And maybe that's how it was, but note Jesus doesn't ask her to do it, she just does it, out of gratitude, perhaps. Or it may be that this was her role in Peter's house and Jesus, healing her in the simple act of taking her by the hand, restores her to her community and her place in it. This might also be a way to dress up the very real fact that gender roles and expectations then, and now, confine both women and men, though certainly women more than men.

Peter's mother-in-law gets up and serves. Some call her the first Deacon in the church. Jesus says, later, that he is among us as one who serves, and if we want to be those who lead, we must be those who serve. She models that.

After sundown people start bringing folks to Jesus, because after sundown was when the sabbath was over. It hasn't stopped Jesus from healing, of course, from doing works of compassion and mercy on the sabbath (breaking Jewish law) but it has kept others back. Whatever restraint they had shown is now released. Jesus is swamped with people.

## **Meditation**

### **"Author! Author!"**

The poet Robert Browning once said if the President, or a judge, comes into a room, we would stand up. If Jesus came into a room, we would kneel. That's the difference in their respective power and authority.

Jesus taught, Mark relates to us, as one who had authority, and, ironically, not like the scribes. The scribes were comfortable quoting scripture and Jewish tradition to help believers lead faithful lives. But knowing something and just spouting it off isn't the same as having authority. If you claim to know something, Paul tells the folks at Corinth, you don't yet have "the necessary" knowledge. Knowledge *of* God is no substitute for love *for* God. It isn't that we know God, we are called to love God, who first loved us and knows us. Authentic Christian knowledge is based on a love that builds up. Or, as Billy Graham once said: "Knowledge is horizontal; wisdom is vertical."

The authority we have in Christ Jesus, where idols no longer matter, is not an opportunity for us to trample on other peoples' sensibilities or shortcomings. It is, instead, a call to love. Knowledge easily leads to arrogance, while love leads to mutual edification. It isn't that it's bad to know things. Paul simply wants us to put our knowledge in service to love.

Jesus doesn't have to quote the scriptures to claim their authority for himself because he's living them. He trusts in his own inherent authority: what he knows to be true, and who he knows himself to be. He trusts his feelings, not the facts. And here I go again (knowledge puffs up; love builds up), in the Greek, the word used for authority here (*exousia*) is a version of the word used in the Nicene Creed where it speaks of Jesus being of one substance with God. True authority doesn't control - it doesn't have to - instead, it authors: it creates in its hearer a wish, a desire, to love, to emulate, to do what the authority does. This resonates with the people gathered at the synagogue in Capernaum more than any Torah study would have.

Jesus knows who he is, and that teaches the folks there more about God than any scribe could have taught them. To know yourself, and to be yourself, and to love yourself, and to know you are beloved of God: there is an authority in this that no powers can stand against, and all you have to do once you reach that point is say to your demons "be silent" and they will be silent. In the Gospel story today, only the demons know who Jesus is; only they understand his authority. The people have an inkling (but not really) and the scribes of course have no clue. If we had the same knowledge of Jesus the demons had, it would both save us, and cast them out. As with Luke Skywalker, if we trust our feelings, well, even the Death Star is no match for that.

We live in an information age, but possessing information isn't the same as having knowledge, and it certainly isn't the same thing as obtaining wisdom, nor is it the same as having authority. What we have lost in our search for information is the capacity for awe, and wonder, and a belief in the supernatural. The great preacher Fred Craddock has said, "Not believing in demons has hardly eradicated evil from our world." When we used our brains, we came up with the atom bomb. What sort of a world might we create if we let our hearts inform us? What might happen if we gave authority back to the artist, the poet, the musician, the dreamer? When we stop needing to be "in the know," and start living "in the mystery," we'll find out. Amen.