

Paul Wayne Benjamin
Introduction to the Old Testament
Integrative Project
12/01/04

Option #2: Wednesday Evening Advent Services.

1.) Informational piece for the congregational newsletter introducing the series.

During this season of Advent we are filled with joy and anticipation for the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. During this time of decorating, parties, shopping, and baking we will be taking a little extra time out of our busy holiday schedule to spend in worship and reflection. Every Wednesday evening we will be holding special worship services at 7:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. These services will be informal and followed by time for sharing over desserts provided by YOURS TRULY! This year our series will focus on "Coping with Stress and Depression During the Holidays". Bring a friend and join us!

Wednesday December 1, 2004 – Service of Healing and World AIDS Day Vigil
"Reflections on Psalm 22"

Wednesday December 8, 2004 – "Body, Mind, & Spirit: Feeding the Poor and Hungry"
Social Injustice Denounced!

Wednesday December 15, 2004 – "Coming to Terms: Reconciliation"
"Reflections on Psalm 32"

Wednesday December 22, 2004 – "Blue Christmas Service"
"Release from the Prison of Depression"

12/1/04 Order of Service

Silence for meditation

Hymn "O Christ, the Healer, We Have Come" LBW # 360

LBW page 127

First Lesson: Psalm 22

Prayer of the Day

Second Lesson: Luke 7:1-10

Meditation

Hymn "O God whose will is Life and Good" LBW # 435

Litany of Healing and Prayers for World AIDS Day

12/8/04 Order of Service

Silence for meditation

Hymn "There Is a Balm in Gilead" WOV #737

LBW page 127

First Lesson: Isaiah 5:8-17

Prayer of the Day

Second Lesson: Luke 10: 25-37

Meditation

Hymn "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" WOV #775

LBW page 129

12/15/04 Order of Service

Silence for meditation

Hymn "In All Our Grief" WOV #739

LBW page 127

First Lesson: Psalm 32

Prayer of the Day

Second Lesson: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Meditation

Hymn "My Life Flows On in Endless Song" WOV #781

LBW page 129

12/22/04 Order of Service

Silence for meditation

Hymn "Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow" LBW #355

LBW page 127

First Lesson: Isaiah 61:1-11

Prayer of the Day

Second Lesson: John 3:16

Meditation

Hymn "Once Again My Heart Rejoices" LBW #46

LBW page 129

Prayer of the Day #1 – We remember and return to you, O Lord our God. We are not worthy to have you come under our roof but only say the word and we shall be healed. We beseech you to bless us with the healing presence of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. We lift up our pain and suffering to you and ask your blessings on all who have lost their health through chronic illness, cancer, disease, addictions, HIV, and AIDS. Give comfort to the suffering and solace to the dying. Bless the caregivers in our community especially doctors, nurses, researchers, and hospice chaplains. We ask this through your Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer of the Day #2 – O Lord of hosts you are exalted by justice and show yourself holy by righteousness. Teach us who our neighbors are and help us to “go and do likewise”. Be with us, merciful God, as we open our hearts and minds to your holy presence. In this rushed and busy time help us to focus on what you would have us do. Teach us to live more simply as we await the coming of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer of the Day #3 – In this broken world you are a hiding place for us, O Lord, and preserve us from trouble. Help us to put away all things old including grudges, resentment, and hostility. We thank you for the forgiveness of all of our sins against you and each other. We ask for your continued blessings as we come together as new creatures of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ to go out and be true ambassadors of reconciliation. We ask these things through you and the Holy Spirit, on God, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer of the Day #4 – Lord God, your spirit is upon us as we celebrate the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask that you scatter our doubts, fears, anxieties and depression that hold us as prisoners. Help us to realize the freedom of your love and to celebrate your gift to us. Send forth your light, O Lord, and shine in our darkness. Amen.

Homily for Wednesday December 1, 2004

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.”

My *Harper Collins Study Bible* describes the words of this psalmist by saying “the picture of sickness unto death may be metaphorical for severe distress or it may reflect actual illness.” However those of us who have held the hand of someone who was extremely ill or dying can relate to those words as reflecting “actual illness.” Maybe some of you are suffering this very evening with an illness. Have you ever felt like this?

During her last recovery from surgery, my Mother’s mouth was very dry all of the time and she would keep asking for ice-chips to chew on as fluids were restricted. I’m sure that some of you can relate. And when you have so many aches and pains that your heart feels like wax, melted inside you. Illness takes so much out of you. Sometimes the choice between living in pain or being spaced out on medications isn’t a choice easily made.

10 years ago I stood at the death-bed of my brother, Victor, who finally succumbed to AIDS. Just hours before he had suddenly come awake and saw our family gathered in the hospital room. He kissed me and our Mother and gave two winks as if to say “it’s all right, I’m ready to rest.” I remember that I felt “poured out like water” at that moment. I wasn’t the one sick in bed, however, the rush to Florida and the 52 hours that followed were exhausting. Those who have been caregivers know that feeling. When you think you have nothing more to give. Then at one point while he was sleeping I went into the hospice chapel to pray. In front of me was a large portrait of Jesus in the Garden. At first I thought this picture was odd for a hospice chapel until I remembered Jesus’ words

“Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” I prayed those same words giving it all up to God and although I felt physically poured out my own cup was once again filled. Just when there was no longer any hope for my brother and I had lost my faith in God, there in that chapel I WAS HEALED.

Healing comes in many different forms at various times. Physical, spiritual, emotional. And as we pray for the restoration of health and wholeness we might remember the words of the psalmist “for he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.” aHa