

Sunday October 11, 2020 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study – Philippians 4:1-9
“That I May Gain Christ”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, discuss your anxiety or worry levels (from 1 to 10; with 1 being completely content and calm and 10 being freaked out).

Philippians 4:1-9 Context: The Christian community at Philippi seems to have been most supportive of Paul’s ministry, and the most expressive of the love and unity that resulted from their fellowship in the Gospel. This week's reading returns to the theme of joy, a joy that comes from knowing God's love and grace. He urges harmony among the members. “My loyal companion” is probably Epaphroditus who delivered this letter from Paul to the Philippians (2:25-30). The "gentleness" of which Paul speaks is perhaps better understood as "generosity" or "consideration for others," a characteristic that Paul has already attributed to Christ himself. Finally, Paul assures the Philippians that if they set their minds on noble things and the character of Paul’s own life, then the God of peace – of healing, wholeness, contentedness, completeness – will always go with them.

Read Philippians 4:1-9

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Philippians 4:1-9 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- As a group, take turns naming one situation or circumstance that brings you worry. Have one person write down the list of worries. (This will be used again during the prayer time.)
- Do you believe it is possible not to worry about anything (v. 6)? What is Paul’s antidote or remedy for worry?
- Often, we worry about things outside our control. How can prayer be an answer to our excessive worry? When we worry, how we are trying to control things we can’t control?
- Paul also encourages us to rejoice (v. 4). What’s the difference between happiness and joy? (Happiness often depends on the circumstances; joy is transcendent of our circumstances.)

- Paul also advocates that we treat one another with gentleness (v. 5). How can that be a form of ministry and witnessing to our faith during this time when anxiety seems more pronounced? How does treating others with gentleness begin from a place of joy?
- What practices, habits, or routines can help us “think on these things” (v. 8)?

Read Philippians 4:1-9 again

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Gracious God, we confess our proclivity to worry. Help us to be more aware when we begin to worry, so that we can turn those moments of anxiety into opportunities of prayer. Guide our thoughts that we might focus on your truth, your beauty, and your justice. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father 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.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power

and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.