

## An Ode to Our Church

(Psalm 100)

It is easy to do, looking back over the past year;  
To give thanks for the indescribable joys of being here.

The laughter we've shared and songs we've sung;  
With countless offerings of support, love and caring to go along.

The joyful noise of children doth fill our sanctuary and education halls,  
Why every week, friends, I think you could say we are having a ball.

For pasta, poetry, potlucks, soup at six, a hayride and Halloween we did gather,  
For Bible study, ministry meetings, dessert first; some might say we like to chatter.

This past summer, our youth to Denver went,  
And despite a little car trouble, they discovered what sharing God's love meant.

Here at home new windows were installed, grocery bags filled,  
Breakfast at Wilson, GIFTs ministry too, it was hard to sit still.

Lincoln came back for a visit and a band did play,  
Thank you, thank you to Jim and Janet Hay!

So many reasons to smile, such unconditional love and unceasing care,  
And yet there are just a few more lines of this poem to share.

Faithful newsletter folders, beautiful anthems played and sung,  
Ministry members, a staff who is a blessing, **but wait**...I am not done

Laverne collating bulletins inserts galore,  
our volunteers always giving just a bit more.

Today new members did join; with open arms, hearts and enthusiasm we say,  
Thank you for journeying with us and sharing your presence along the way.

This week, thanks to Lyle, new paint appears on the walls downstairs;  
All in all I do declare; there is a sweet, sweet Spirit in air.

And for anonymous chocolate left on my desk  
Friends, that is as good as it gets!

So, let us shout out with a joyful noise and give thanks today;  
For friends, family, faith, our hope-filled future and especially God's grace guiding our way.  
This week we celebrate Thanksgiving and welling up within us we find we must-o  
And say it with me friends, **sing out with gusto!**

For centuries people have gathered with glad and generous hearts to worship the One who creates us and claims us as beloved. This morning, we heard the familiar words of the 100<sup>th</sup> Psalm which invites us to make a joyful noise, to shout out with a contagious enthusiasm to the One who sings and shouts out right along side us. The image of God who delights in a cacophony of voices clamoring together is not one that usually pops into our minds or that we easily associate with the sacred. Too often, I sense, our image of God is more like the response of my parents when I would turn up my boom box with the hair bands of the 80s blaring as they would shout up to my room, “turn down that noise.” Our aesthetic of worship has been influenced by our Congregational ancestor’s serious, if not somber, style. And yet, friends, if we are struggling to suppress a yawn in the midst of worship, would God’s response be any different? If the psalmist is right and one of the ways to worship authentically and fully is with a joyful noise. What might that mean for us today? What kinds of joyful noises seep out of the doors of this church into the streets awakening and speaking to the souls of those wandering past?

But you see, making a joyful noise goes beyond just singing. The 100<sup>th</sup> Psalm is a call to worship. It would be read as people gathered, to help them process and orient their hearts for worship. Picture in your mind’s eye a group of people who haven’t seen each other for a week. They have been tending the fields and sheep. And as they draw near to the temple, there they see Joseph and they want to check on how crop is doing. There are the sisters Mary and Martha who dance around giddy and whispers excitedly with the other girls. There is a young boy John who takes himself a little too seriously. The opening words of this psalm are about community, connecting and caring and sharing with each other. At some point a hymn would begin softly and soon all the people gathered from the corners of the land would join in and sing out. As the procession went from outside the walls into the courtyard lead by the priests into the temple, they would remind each other who they are worshiping. They worship One who creates, the One who spoke and all of creation was set spinning and dancing in response to the melody of God’s voice. The One who creates, who grabbed a glob of mud, fashioned a being and breathed life into *Adam’s* nose. This, this is the One we still worship and still sing out to. But the psalmist is not content to simply identify who worship is directed toward, rather digging deeper, worship takes shape in response to the One who claims us. Worship is a response to the One who invites and enters into relationship with us. We are God’s beloved and that truth has always for centuries spoken so deeply to our souls and truly has the power to challenge and change our lives.

But the psalmist not only invites us into worship, the psalmist reminds us why we worship. We worship God because goodness is woven into our life. We discover God’s goodness when we feel the energy of a hug. We encounter God’s goodness in the chatter and clanging of dinner plates. We stumble into God’s goodness when out of the blue a friend we are thinking about calls us or texts us. ***The joyful noise of daily living is the soundtrack that leads us each week into worship.*** Where this week did you encounter the serendipitous grace of God? Where did you bump into God’s love in a real way? I felt God’s love last week at our new members’ class and I am so grateful for each of your presence here today. I saw God’s presence at the three meetings I had this week, at the listening session for the Wisconsin Conference and as I attended my second Alzheimer’s

board meeting. I sensed God in the energy on Tuesday when Becky showed me around Wilson School. And friends, here in this very room this morning, I feel God stirring and swirling and shouting out to us filling my heart with joy.

One way to enter into and live out thanksgiving is to make a joyful noise. But that noise may not come in the form of a sound we hear, a joyful noise can be felt in our very being; stirring our souls and awaking our hearts. Friends, a joyful noise can be felt in our presence as we listen. A joyful noise can be seen dancing in the eyes of another. A joyful noise is that sacred sensation that we feel and that moment when goose bumps cover our arms. A joyful noise is our response to God's presence in our lives. I think we as a church can make a joyful noise to this entire city in a meaningful and holy way. But it will take willingness and openness to exploring new possibilities and offering real care to our neighbors. Let us make a joyful noise by serving hot chocolate to people waiting in line at ECHO. Let us make a joyful noise to the kids in the CASA program. Let us make a joyful noise alongside the children who live in this neighborhood. Let us make such a loving, sacred sound that people from the neighborhood stop in just to see what all the commotion is about. Friends, there is a sweet, holy presence that is in this place. We have a light and love and a holy noise that cannot be contained within us but that is welling up in our midst. So, friends, let us share God's love and grace and peace and presence today and for weeks to come so that we find that we must-o let our whole lives sing out with a joyful noise and gusto!

Let us do just that, would you please find the insert in your bulletin, "Draw the circle wide". Would you please stand and link an elbow with some other people so that we are all connected and let's fill this space with the melody of our voices.