

# Welcome to Worship June 12, 2022

## Suamico United Methodist Church

Suamico United Methodist Church  
3266 Lakeview Drive ~ Suamico

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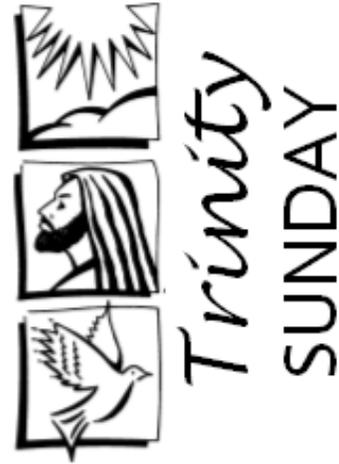
Office phone: 920-434-1168

Church Office Hours: Tues, Wed, Thur: 9am -1pm  
afternoons by appointment

Email: suamicoumc@gmail.com

Website: www.suamicoumc.org  
Social Media: Facebook and Instagram

For pastoral emergencies, you may contact  
Pastor Graham West at 715-491-4504



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### Preparation for Worship

*"Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."*

(Acts 11:9)

\* Please stand as you are able

### Prelude and Welcome

\***Worship Preparation Hymn** UMH 66 *"Praise, My Soul the King of Heaven"* v 1-3

\***Call to Worship** (*Responsively with people reading bold print*)

We gather to praise the God known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**We are called into faith, hope and love by the God known as three-in-one.**

As the body of Christ, we suffer tension headaches for we don't see life and faith the same.

**Pray that the forgiveness of Christ brings us together as his body here on earth.**

\***Hymn** UMH 64 *"Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"*

\***Unison Prayer** (*unison*)

**God of heaven and earth, we exalt you as the Lord of Glory, and we humble ourselves in your presence.**

**Though exalted and lifted up, you draw near to every seeking heart to show us your gracious intent.**

**Your steadfast love is our anchor holding us firmly in Christ, our Lord and Savior.**

**Mercy and grace, forgiveness and salvation, love and compassion are gifts given us by you.**

**Forgive us, we pray, for we often find ourselves in conflict with each other.**

**Gather us into your body as we come together according to your desire for your people; in Jesus' name. Amen.**

**Scripture** Acts 11:1-18

**Special Music** “Glorify Thy Name” by Donna Adkins; Eva Finke, soloist

**Sermon:** “*Tension Headaches*” ~ *Tension in the faith community must be relieved*  
Graham N. West, pastor

**Hymn** UMH 480 “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go”

**Offering** FWS 2031 “We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise”

**\*Prayer of Dedication** (*Responsively with people reading bold print*)  
How blessed we are for you show us your goodness and love.  
**We offer ourselves and these gifts to serve God. Amen.**

**Prayers of the People** ~ *Sharing our Joys and Concerns*

**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 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 and ever. Amen.**

**\*Hymn** UMH 671 “Lord, Dismiss Us With Thy Blessing”

**Benediction and Postlude**

UMH - United Methodist Hymnal (blue book)  
FWS - Faith We Sing (black book)  
W&S - Worship & Song (green book)

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## **Announcements and information**

**June 12** 6:00p Scouting Committee Discussion in Room #2

**June 14** 10:00a U.M.W. in Fellowship Hall  
6:00p 4H in Fellowship Hall

**Today is Peace with Justice Sunday.** There are special giving envelopes in your bulletin if you wish to contribute. If using a personal check, please make the check out to “SUMC” with “Peace with Justice” on the memo line. Contributions help support this mission which is dedicated to seeking peaceful solutions, creating and supporting peace-related ministries around the world.

Next Sunday will be Pastor Graham’s last Sunday with Suamico UMC. Be sure to stay after worship on June 19<sup>th</sup> to share in fellowship and conversation as we wish him well and say our good-byes to him and Kathi.

You can help the Pulaski Pantry in June by adding an item to your grocery shopping:  
\* boxes of Hamburger Helper™ \* boxes of macaroni and cheese \* canned fruit  
Collection bins are in the church narthex entryway and the shelf by the church offices.

Share your gift of music during summer worship! Sign-up on the narthex sign-up sheet, or speak with Eva at the piano to discuss offering “Summer Special Music”

Please sign up to take a turn hosting with a friend or another family by signing up in the narthex.

Save the Date: June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6pm in the church parking lot for campfire with S’mores, sing-a-long, and outdoor yard games. Everyone is invited, don’t forget to bring your lawn chair :)

## ***Tension Headaches***

*Tension in the faith community must be relieved*

### ***Tension***

#### ***Tension in the church***

A young man stepped to the podium to deliver what was likely a maiden speech. He was neatly attired, polished and articulate, as he addressed the 2019 Special General Conference of The United Methodist Church, meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, in February 2019. This special session had been called to act on a report from the Commission on a Way Forward, authorized to examine paragraphs in The Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and to explore options to strengthen church unity.

A public theologian, advocate, author, speaker and seminary student at Boston University School of Theology, J. J. Warren was a certified candidate for ordination. After making an impassioned plea for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons at the UMC's top law-making assembly, J.J.'s speech went viral, and his advocacy has been broadly covered. His first book, *Reclaiming Church: A Call to Action for Religious Rejects*, was later published.

Whether or not you agree with him, his speech is stirring, compelling and incisive:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7dMVbmHMpk>.

#### ***Tension escalates***

Here we are today living with tension in the church. Some believe this, others believe that. Some see it this way, others see it that way. Some are hoping for significant change while others are standing their ground. How are we as a denomination to find our way forward? Some want to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church and join the newly launched Global Methodist Church. Others would see the UMC take an inclusive approach and welcome all people into its fellowship notwithstanding their sexual orientation.

But obviously, this is not the only issue of tension in the church: the place of scripture among us and its interpretation, worship styles and music genres, the role of women and their subordination, sexualized behaviors and sexual misconduct, social justice and denominational position on controversial issues, free speech, gun control, health care, and abortion also rise to the top. Economic issues, the sharing of wealth, and the care of the poor are also before us. The right to vote, fair elections, and the democratic process have had significant air time. How do we navigate ourselves with integrity through these issues?

Every local congregation also has its tension headaches. We're people after all; we see things differently; we have different views, different histories, different beliefs, and different expectations. When you think about the complexities of life, the challenges we face, and the circumstances before us, we hold together because God's Spirit is active among us to love and serve God. But we do have to ask ourselves how we will live together with differences? Do we have to see things the same? What about those who don't agree with us? Do we expel those who don't see things as we do? Are we not the same in different kinds of ways?

#### ***Critics step to the front***

As the gospel advanced, it crossed new frontiers drawing in, according to the Jewish believers, some unlikely characters with little background in Judaism. Peter stands before a feisty group of critics; the Jerusalem church required circumcision for new believers. In other words, they first had to become Jewish before they could be recognized as Christian. Peter had visited these believers, whom the Jews called unclean; he had even eaten with them contrary to his religious practice. But more was at stake for these Jewish Christians believed that Christ and the Holy Spirit belonged to them exclusively; now Peter had shared with the uncircumcised. They had a

them-and-us attitude that hindered faith yet they were only following the religious culture of the day.

Who are the *uncircumcised* believers lacking inclusion in today's church? Christian culture has frowned on some for reasons like socioeconomic class, cultural standing, sexual orientation, as well as age, race, gender, status (immigrant), morals, and stereotypes.

Even inclusiveness requires some defense, so Peter is called on the carpet for breaking the rules. He is asked to explain his actions. The question then is how Gentiles might experience God's grace when they lack covenantal circumcision. This was a critical issue for the early church. It has significance for us too when different religions interact and attempt to find their place in relationship to each other in this diverse world.

Peter's actions gave rise to tension in the early church. He offered faith in Christ and even ate with them. It's the very issue that disturbed Jesus' critics and also some faith communities today: who is welcome at the Lord's Table?

Peter resisted the notion of playing church. He did not sidestep controversy; rather he faced his critics squarely. Controversy needs to be voiced, not closeted. Confusion must be clarified, not buried. Conflict needs to be resolved, not ignored. Yet it must be done not argumentatively but narratively, as a story as Peter did. Critics may be touched as they listen to the story, get the drift of what God is doing, and even celebrate God's leading. "*When they heard this,*" that is Peter's story, "*they were silenced. And they praised God.*"

## **Communal Relief**

### **A community serves relief**

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/sports/other/buffalo-mass-shooting-suspect-appears-in-court/vi-AAxu7ZW>

It was a grocery store, for heaven's sake, a supermarket, where on this Saturday afternoon, May 14, shoppers mingled. There was a hello here, a greeting over there, and an excuse me, please when shots rang out as bedlam sent alarmed people scurrying in every direction. Only 123 seconds passed before at least ten shoppers lay motionless on the floor, and three others groaned with injuries.

Described as racially motivated attacks, the mass shooting at Tops in Buffalo, New York, is a stark reminder of the perils of living on America's main street. As one community resident said, "Black Americans can't shop, can't go to church, can't just live in this country without fear of being killed." Community leaders are describing it as a racist hate crime.

The shooter, eighteen-year-old Payton Gendron from Conklin, New York, drove 200 miles to Buffalo and specifically attacked this store because of its black clientele. He wore tactical gear, including a bulletproof vest during the attack, and used a semiautomatic rifle. The charges against him include hate crimes and racially motivated violent extremism.

Members of the NFL Buffalo Bills visited the scene of the shooting Wednesday, handing out groceries and serving meals to residents now left without a grocery store. "To be out here and seeing people laughing and smiling again—that warms my heart," said Buffalo Bill's quarterback, Josh Allen.

### **Testimony can change listeners**

Intriguingly, Peter starts talking and narrates the story of his encounter with God. He saw a vision in which he was commanded to eat what was not kosher for a Jew. When he turned away refusing to partake, God challenged him for calling God's creation profane. Repeated three times, it is followed by the arrival of Gentile visitors imploring him to come with them. Peter did so, and when he arrived among them, as he spoke, "*the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning.*" He concludes that if God had given the Gentiles the same gift the Jews had received, who was he not to include these non-Jewish believers?

By telling the story of God's action, he builds his case justifying the stance he took. Peter is telling how God fulfilled the Pentecost promise of the Holy Spirits' outpouring on "*all flesh*." It's almost as if Peter is saying, "This is what God did; if you have a problem with that, take it up with God."

Maybe we spend too much time wrestling with others based on tradition and theology instead of allowing the story to change our experience of God. Story is the narration of God's dealing with us; it persuades us because of its reality.

Arguments rely on tight reasoning creating winners and losers. Testimony creates space for us to listen non-argumentatively. Often we listen only to decide on our comeback but Peter listens with grace to the criticism pushing ahead to cross barriers to new beliefs and credible action. Unlike his critics who assume they know what God is about, Peter shows humility, listening carefully, speaking with grace, and acting with strength. He testifies that God's love is greater than their love, resonating with his listeners as they are transformed.

Testimony changed stiff argument into discerning God's hand moving among them and bringing the church to a new place. It has the power to convict us of the new thing God is doing; when we go along with it, we are changed. Our faith increases, joy abounds, and we are set free to follow Christ extending God's love.

### ***Christ's alternate vision is transformative***

Incredibly, when Peter's critics hear how the Holy Spirit is moving among Gentile believers, they cease complaining and give thanks for what God is doing among them. The gospel is bringing life even when we can't imagine it. Often we find ourselves boxed in yet Christ finds a way to burst open the confines that hinder the gospel. God has no intent to exclude some for Christ's compassion pushes over fences, crosses barriers, and overcomes resistance to include all in God's love. His action compels us to restate the gospel so there is room at the table for all God's creation. We cannot truly be gospel people while we exclude some, also created by God and for whom Jesus died. At Cornelius' house, Peter realized that the gift of salvation was for all; none are excluded.

Interestingly, Peter allows the Spirit to take him to places where his heart wasn't ready to go. He was listening to God's Spirit through what happened, what was said, his inner nudges, and what he discerned. He was pushed outside his comfort zone, so good news happened for Gentile believers. It was not an easy road to walk as it was the road less traveled. Ever since Gentiles have found their way along the same path to God. It was also an incredible blessing that the Jerusalem church heard through his testimony the new thing God was doing: "*When they heard this, they were silenced.*"

What is God calling you to do? Where does God want us to go? How can we overcome our tension headaches and act in faith? Relief comes as we devote ourselves to Christ, act Christlike, and accept those he sends across our path.

Graham N. West