

The First Community Church of Southborough
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February 28, 2021 – The Second Sunday in Lent

Blessings, Everyone!

Let us begin our “time together” by slowly, carefully reading the following *Litany of the Person:*

Image of God

born of God’s breath

vessel of divine Love

after his likeness

dwelling of God

capacity for the infinite

eternally known

chosen of God

home of Infinite Majesty

abiding in the Son

called from eternity

life in the Lord

temple of the Holy Spirit

branch of Christ

receptacle of the Most High

wellspring of Living Water

heir of the kingdom

the glory of God

abode of the Trinity.

God sings this litany

eternally in his Word

This is who you are.

Yes—This is who you are! Believe it or not, *this is who you are!*

This “Litany of the Person” is from the Abbey of Gethsemani in Trappist, Kentucky. I visited Gethsemani, where Thomas Merton is buried, many years ago when I was in Kentucky to take part in a ceremony at the Motherhouse for a former CPE student and dear friend of mine who was taking her final vows as a member of the Dominican order of religious women (the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena in Kentucky). The Trappist monastery is a beautiful place, a special place, a sacred space. I remember that, as a man (even though I was just a Protestant minister), I was allowed to go inside the monastery and walk around in the gardens, while my companions, all of whom were Roman Catholic nuns, because they were women, were not. I hesitate to bring this up at the risk of possibly offending them (just in case they are on this mailing list). As I recall, when I began to “rub it in” to them, they threatened to drive away and leave me there (who says that nuns aren’t in touch with their shadow?). I confess that, for a moment, I thought that might not be the worst thing that could happen to me, to live in the monastery where Thomas Merton lived, for despite (or perhaps because of) my radical immersion in the “active” life, I have found myself strongly drawn to the “contemplative” life as well.

If we take this Litany of the Person into our heart in prayer, I think we will hopefully glimpse how God feels about us and the way God wants us to see ourselves.

Keeping in Touch

Concerns:

We hold in prayer:

- Our country. We stand in need of prayer for healing, for an end to the hatred that has led to the polarization of our people around political and social issues. Our tribalistic mentality needs to be replaced with a new, more inclusive, more enlightened vision of who we are as Americans, and we need the patience and dedication to make the true American way of life a reality for all people.
- Our world. We stand in need of a vision of world community, a world where people care about each other and where we know deep down that we are all in this together. Most of the problems that the peoples of the world face are solvable, if only we put our minds and our tremendous resources to work on them.
- Nature. Our environment. The world in which we live. Approximately 1,000,000 little and some big animals are in danger of extinction. This is not right! The melting ice cap. Our little planet is in need of healing and tender-loving care. Many people in Texas are feeling the effects of climate change (and corporate greed) in ways that are absolutely devastating.
- The 1 in 10 American children who live in poverty, who are food insecure, under constant threat of eviction, and who may be stressed by the threat of neighborhood violence. Congress (with our prodding) should take seriously the measure put forward by our own Representative Richard Neal, the Springfield Democrat who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, to increase the tax credit families get per child from the current \$2,000 to \$3,000 for children under 6 and to \$3,600 for children ages 6-17. BTW, this tax credit is not currently available to a family making under \$2,500, e.g., a single mom who has lost her job and is living with her parents or a sibling. Columbia University researchers maintain that more than one-third of American children don't get the full benefit of the tax credit—including half of Black and Latino children and a stunning 70% of kids with single mothers. C'mon, Man!
- The over 5,000,000 people in our country who, because of the pandemic, are newly unemployed, many of whom have lost their health insurance because it was tied to their employment (a good argument for at least having an option of obtaining health insurance that is not dependent upon one's employer).
- The approximately 900 Haitians who came to this country through Mexico seeking asylum who have recently been deported because our asylum system is broken and their applications can't be processed. They are being returned to a country where 60% of its people live in poverty, where there has been a wave of brutal kidnapping for ransom, a country still reeling from the 2010 earthquake and Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Thanks to Mattie Cummings, we support a mission that she helped establish in a rural section of Haiti.
- Those who have become seriously ill though having contracted COVID-19; families that have lost loved ones to this virus; and all those whose lives have been disrupted in serious ways because of the pandemic restrictions. BTW, being asked to wear a mask and socially distance does not qualify one to receive intercessory prayer.
- Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, our President and Vice President, and their new administration and cabinet. The rebuilding of our government so it can serve the function that is its charge: increasing the safety, security, and well-being of all our citizens, and being a shining light, a model of true functional democracy to the world.

- Sheila (a colleague of Dianne Simmons), her husband Danny, and their two sons. Danny, who contracted COVID-19 in December and who recently suffered a fall, is home from the hospital and is doing fairly well. Danny, who is still recovering from COVID-induced pneumonia, remains on Hospice Care. The family thanks us for remembering them in our prayers.

- Paul and Darlene would like us to keep Ann-Marie and Emily Kate Sanderson in our prayers. Ann-Marie has a serious case of COVID-19 and Emily Kate (12) says she feels like she has “been hit by a bus.” She apparently does not have pneumonia, which we feared. Jay received the vaccine through his participation in a clinical trial; Zach had a relatively mild case, and Charlie (so far) has dodged the bullet.

- Ursula Guenon, who has been admitted to UMass for a heart-lung problem (thankfully, not COVID). Let us keep Bill and Ursula in our prayers.

(If you are in need of prayer or if you know of someone who stands in need of prayer, and you would like to ask us to pray for them/you, please let me know.)

Thank you to:

- Those who have already turned in their 2021 pledges to the General Fund, and those Friends of the Church who have either already sent or pledged a special gift to support us financially in the year to come.

- Sandy McKeen, who has graciously offered to pull together the various and sundry reports into our 2020 Annual Report. *Please send everything to her in electronic form!*

COVID-19 and Sunday Worship as the Gathered Church

We are in the process of compiling and publishing our Annual Report—2020. If you are (technically) serving on any board of committee, even if you are not the chair of the committee, would you please take the initiative to have your committee submit a report.

We hope that everyone who offered to serve on a board or committee but did not have the opportunity to do so this past year, will be willing to extend his/her term for the coming year as well.

<i>Birthdays</i>	
Rowena Robertson	4 th
Dorothy Larson	5 th
Emily Hite	10 th
Walter Hite	11 th
Susan Elias	12 th

Audio Weekly Worship Service

We are offering an abbreviated weekly worship service on our “Pod Cast” site. There is a link to it on the Home page of our church website: www.firstcommunitychurch.com. It can also be accessed from a link at the top of the Sermons page. On the Pod site, each service is listed by date.

The reflection/homily is the reflection that is sent to those on our expanded church contact list, a list that is comprised of church members, members of our larger church family, and friends of the church who have asked to be put on our contact list. The pastor’s reflection is also accessible in printed form on our website in the sermon section.

If you would like to have a copy of the audio service/reflection (or this newsletter/reflection) emailed directly to you when it is recorded and printed (usually

Saturday night or Sunday morning) rather than when it gets posted on our website (which can be several days later), please send an email to Reverend Sanderson and he can make it happen.

Quote/Thought of the Day on Patience

“Patience and Diligence, like faith, remove mountains.” William Penn

Attention-Grabbling Church Signs

Seven Days

Without Prayer

Makes One Weak

(Get it?)

Kids Say the Darndest Things!

“Jesus ate the Last Supper with the twelve decibels.”

Worship Service Music

Following the very appreciative feedback about our Prelude selection last week, this week we are following it up with another cut from the same cd: “Have Thine Own Way, Lord,” sung by the Blind Boys of Alabama and (I think) Vince Gill.

Missions:

We have received the following thank-you from The Salvation Army (the recipient of our December mission outreach):

*Dear Members of First Community Church of Southborough,
On behalf of The Salvation Army and those we serve, thank you for your extremely generous gift! Your contribution in the amount of \$505 will be used to support vital services for those that are in great need here in Framingham at Christmas time and in the months to follow.
In these challenging times, we continue to serve low income, working, and unemployed families with food, diapers, transportation assistance, utility assistance, clothing, and other forms of financial aid so that they are not forced to choose between paying household bills and purchasing groceries.
Again, thank you for your thoughtful gift.
Many Blessings!
Lt. Jamie Blanchette – Assistant Corps Officer*