



Worship Service Theme: Faith

Helpful Elements:

Green table covering (ordinary time)

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Today we'll be looking at the idea of **faith** – a big topic! We'll think and talk about what it means to live and grow in faith.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd," together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

Joyful Joyful, We Adore Thee
Amazing Grace

First reading: Psalm 146:3-7

³ Put not your trust in princes,

in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

⁴ When his breath departs, man returns to the earth;

on that very day his plans perish.

⁵ Blessed is the person whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord God,

⁶ who made heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that is in them,

who keeps faith forever;

⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed,

who gives food to the hungry.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy
Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: 1 Peter 1:6-9

⁶ In [living hope] you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen [Christ], you love him. Though you do not now see [Christ], you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:
Softy and Tenderly
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let's talk more about faith.

- What does it mean to *be* faithful? What do faithful actions look like?
 - True and steadfast; committed to a course.
 - In marriage vows, for example, being faithful means staying loyal, “forsaking all others.”
- Tell me some things that you’ve been faithful to in your life, a commitment you made to something or someone even though you didn’t know how it would play out. What roles or choices did you make in faith?
 - Getting married or committing to a long-term friendship.
 - Having and raising kids.
 - Taking on jobs, such as teaching or military service.
 - *[generate other examples]*
- What does it mean to *have* faith?
 - Faith involves trust. You can’t see everything that’s in play.
 - Faith has an object – you have faith *in* something or someone.
 - Faith *chooses to believe* that something is true and real and worth pursuing, even if you can’t see the path or outcome down the road.
- Does having faith mean that every circumstance will go your way?
 - No. Faith sits squarely at the intersection of an elemental struggle: Why do bad things happen?
 - There’s no easy answer to that question. Bad things happen every day ... but good also abounds all around us. Faith is living in hope in the midst of that tension.
 - There is war, and yet there is peace.
 - There is death as we lose people we love, and yet there is new life when a baby is born.
 - There is environmental destruction, and there is rejuvenation and beauty in the natural world.
- The apostle St. Peter wrote to early believers that “you [are] grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

- Do you ever feel tested in your faith? (Who doesn't??) What response can we have in those times?
 - Faith is clinging to God – believing that he is good and living each day in hope.
- So what does it mean to *live* in faith? Do we just sit around waiting for God to make all things right?
 - Faith is *choosing to partner with God* in his story: to bring peace and joy (shalom) to all of creation: “thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.”
 - “Faith requires you to see, hear, feel, and constantly remember your partner—God. Have confidence in [that relationship], even when you are facing mysteries, doubts, and paradoxes.”¹
- How can we *build* faith? Think and talk about what it takes to build any relationship:
 - Time and attention! Do what God does: peacemaking, justice, healing, loving those around us.
 - Gratitude. Practicing gratitude for what you see God doing all around you is a great way to grow faith.

Let’s pray silently and thank God for the gift of faith and ask for the patience and work to grow in faith.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

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. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

My Faith Looks Up to Thee
Standing on the Promises

¹ from *Spiritual Rx*, by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Third Reading: Quotes on Faith

Learning to trust—that is the great thing. You realize that you do have to do your work, you have to provide what you can, but also you have to learn to believe that [God] is going to provide all that you really need. —Bede Griffiths, Benedictine monk

Difficulties can be catalysts to faith. During a dark night of the soul, sometimes all we can do is trust that this, too, will pass. —Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, *Spiritual Rx*

There’s nothing like faith in God to help a fellow who gets booted around once in a while. — Jackie Robinson, who broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball by playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. —Dutch author Corrie ten Boom, imprisoned with her family in WWII for helping Jews escape the Nazis

Suggested Hymns:

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Fourth Reading: From *The Princess and the Goblin*, by George MacDonald

In this story, the princess Irene and her friend Curdie are rescued thanks to help from Irene’s fairy godmother, whom she calls Grandmother. Irene doesn’t realize that only she can see Grandmother, so after they are rescued, Irene brings Curdie to meet her and is stunned that Curdie can’t see her.

“I’ve brought Curdie, grandmother. He wouldn’t believe what I told him [about you] and so I’ve brought him.”

“Yes,” said Grandmother, “I see him. He is a good boy, Curdie, and a brave boy. Aren’t you glad you’ve got him out?”

“Yes, grandmother,” said Irene. “but it wasn’t very good of him not to believe me when I was telling him the truth [about you].”

“People must believe what they can,” said grandmother, “and those who believe more must not be hard upon those who believe less. I doubt if you would have believed it all yourself if you hadn’t seen some of it.”

“Ah! yes grandmother, I dare say. I’m sure you’re right. But he’ll believe now,” said Irene.

“I don’t know about that,” replied her grandmother.

[And sure enough, even though Irene can clearly see and talk with her fairy godmother, Curdie can’t see a thing – and gets angry with Irene for, he thinks, playing a joke on him. Curdie finally leaves the room.]

“What *shall* I do, grandmother?” sobbed the princess Irene, turning her face round upon the lady’s bosom, and shaking with suppressed sobs.

“You must give him time,” said her grandmother; “and you must be content not to be believed for a while. ... Curdie is not yet able to believe some things. Seeing is not believing – it is only seeing. ... We are all very anxious to be understood ... but there is one thing much more necessary: To understand other people.”

Suggested Hymns:

Great is Thy Faithfulness

When the Saints Go Marching In

Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)

Extra Material:

Hebrews 11: 1-6

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible....⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him.