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Delight in the Law

Core Faith

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

At 250 years, we find ourselves celebrating our nation's ideals while honestly confronting our failures, discovering – like Paul – that true hope comes not from self-reliance but from being rescued and transformed by Christ.

REFERENCES

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

Psalm 45:10-17

Romans 7:15-25a

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

COLORS

Green

Worship Planning Notes

Focus text: **Romans 7:15-25a**

For those who live in the U.S., this can be a difficult Sunday to plan, much less start a new series. The holiday weekend means we either have low attendance or a large number of guests from out of town who are spending time with family. As worship planners, this means we have to assess what we can do in worship as worship leaders, as well as what we want our congregants to receive and take with them into the remainder of the holiday.

In addition, Paul's reflections on the war between delight in God's law and the inclination toward sin isn't exactly the easiest text to jump into in the middle of the Fourth of July weekend. But even

if it's not quite the text we want, it may very well be the text we need. Paul's honest and blunt assessment of his struggle between what he wants to do and what he ends up doing is an invitation to all of us to slow down, pay attention, and turn toward the work of grace in our lives.

Find ways today to lean into simplicity, to slow down the pace in the middle of a busy weekend. Invite everyone into a time of centering at the beginning of the service, even just by taking a few slow, deep breaths before the call to worship or opening prayer. Take some extra time with the passing of the peace. Encourage everyone to ask an icebreaker question to those they shake hands with: "What's your favorite ice cream?" "Who is your favorite Bible character?" Encourage everyone to spend time really being with one another in worship. Consider, too, how Paul's words call us into a time of confession and pardon, either as a preparation for the proclamation or as a response. Depending on your community, you might use a litany with a communal response, or you might pray in silence, offering short petitions followed by space for people to pray their own prayers. If your community is uncomfortable with silence, consider having a musician play a simple arrangement of a hymn to underscore the time of prayer. At the end of the prayer of confession, give particular attention to the pardon, because it is through God's pardon and grace that we can turn once again toward God's ways and learn to align our actions with our delight in God's law.

Author biography:

Dr. Lisa Hancock, Director of Worship Arts Ministries, served as an organist and music minister in United Methodist congregations in the legacy Northwest Texas and North Texas Annual Conferences. After receiving her Master of Sacred Music and Master of Theological Studies from Perkins School of Theology, she earned her PhD in Religious Studies from Southern Methodist University, where she researched and wrote on the doctrine of Christ, disability, and atonement. Lisa is also the co-lead of the "Growing in Grace: Accessible Worship for All God's Children" initiative.

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