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Set the Mind

Core Faith

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

Romans 8 invites us to wake up each day with our minds set on Christ, discovering life and peace not through self-centered striving but by letting the Spirit shape how we see, live, and love in the world.

REFERENCES

Genesis 25:19-34

Psalm 119:105-112

Romans 8:1-11

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

COLORS

Green

Worship Planning Notes

Focus text: **Romans 8:1-11**

The writer of 2 Peter famously stated that some of what Paul writes is difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:15-17). I have to wonder if, like me, the author was thinking of today's scripture readings as one of those difficult-to-understand passages. On the surface, these verses seem easy to comprehend. Flesh is bad, spirit is good, etc., etc. But, as the **Preaching Notes** discuss, flesh may not mean what we think it means. That notion shifts how we approach this pericope. Instead of focusing on the denial of the flesh, Paul is asking us to set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

As you plan worship, begin with a list of the things of the Spirit. You might begin with the fruit of the Spirit or just start your own list. You may find that some words appear that you didn't expect—flourishing, delight, wonder—in addition to some of the descriptors we find in scripture. Then, ask yourself: “Which of these (two to three, maximum) does my community need right now? Where and how are we distracted from the Spirit? Where is the pain or worry or conflict so big that we don't know how to find our way out of it? How do we need to reattune ourselves to the things of the Spirit?”

Listen for what the Spirit bubbles up. Then, take those two or three markers of the Spirit's work and build your worship service around them. If one of them is “wonder,” explore which hymns invoke a sense of wonder. If one of them is “peace,” use a prayer of confession and pardon that names where we lack peace and calls on God to guide us into the ways of peace. If one of them is “patience,” plan a guided time of prayer or meditation following the sermon that helps your congregants name and confront the difficulties ahead of them and lean on the Spirit for the perseverance to respond in the power of the Spirit of life and peace instead of the world's despair and discontent.

This week and throughout this series, consider how you might leave room for people to voice or write down their questions about the passage for the day. Romans is a beautiful text, but it is also a complex and sometimes confusing text. By creating room for your congregants to ask questions, you invite everyone to own their perspectives, to recognize their questions as a faithful response to the Word, and to value the process of wrestling with the biblical text as a critical part of faith formation.

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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