



Worship Service Theme: Friendship

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 we'll be looking at the theme of **friendship**. Thank you for joining us.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit 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 today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith, p. 2: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting "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.

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

Hymns:

We Gather Together, p. 3

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 4

Joyful, Joyful, p. 5

First readings: These are three selections about friendship, from the book of Proverbs:

Proverbs 17:17: A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 27:5-6: Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:9: Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and so does the sweetness of a friend that comes from his earnest counsel.

These are the words of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Oh, How I love Jesus, p. 7

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 8

Second reading: This is from the gospel of John (15):

Jesus said to his disciples, ¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you *friends*, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”

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

Hymns:

His Eye is on the Sparrow, p. 9

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 10

Softly and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let's pause our singing for a moment and talk more about friendship.

- What are some qualities that make someone a good friend?
 - trust; loyalty; confidentiality; forgiveness; no gossip; listening; telling the truth; sticks with you through thick and thin; not taken for granted; not too busy; makes you laugh!
 - Think about the classic wedding vows [*start these and let people finish each phrase*]: “for better or ... for worse; for richer or ... for poorer; in sickness and ... in health; until death do us part.”
 - These are qualities of a friend, too—no matter what, they don't jump ship and abandon you
- What makes a not-so-good friend?
 - Someone who is a bad influence; hot temper; easily offended; gossip; abandons you when the going gets tough (you may have heard the phrase “fair weather and foul weather friends”)
- Tell me about some friends you've had in your life. What were or are they like? What qualities did you most love about that person?
- Have you ever had a friend who lives far away, but when you see them you just pick up where you left off? What is that like? How is it possible to remain friends even when you don't see someone for a long time?
- Why is God called our friend?
 - always with us; faithful to his promises; forgives, loves, guides
- How are we a friend to God?
 - love him; love one another; obey and follow no matter what

Let's pray silently for a moment and thank God for the gift of friendship.

(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.

Hymns:

He's Got the Whole World, p. 12

In the Garden, p. 13

Standing on the Promises, p. 14

Third Reading: Aesop's Fable about Friendship¹

Two men were traveling together through a forest, when, all at once, a huge bear crashed out of the brush near them. One of the men, thinking only of his own safety, climbed a tree.

The other man, unable to fight the savage bear alone, threw himself on the ground and lay still, as if he were dead. This man had heard that a bear won't touch a dead body. It must have been true, for the bear snuffed at the man's head awhile. Then, seeming to be satisfied that the man was dead, the bear walked away.

The first man, who had climbed the tree to save himself, climbed down. "It looked just as if that bear whispered in your ear," the man said to his friend on the ground. "What did the bear tell you?"

The man on the ground answered, "The bear told me that it's not at all wise to keep company with someone who would desert his friend in a moment of danger."

Hymns:

It is Well with My Soul, p. 15

Amazing Grace, p. 16

Fourth Reading: Quotes on Friendship

"There is nothing in this world so precious as a faithful friend. A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter, a fortified palace. Friendship is truly a gift from God and clearly more than we deserve." —Fourth century Greek Orthodox theologian Gregory of Nyssa

¹ <http://fablesdfaesop.com/the-bear-and-the-two-travelers.html>

“I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light.” –American author and speaker Helen Keller, who was both blind and deaf

In the children’s book *Charlotte’s Web* by E. B. White, a little pig named Wilbur becomes friends with a kind and gentle spider, Charlotte. Charlotte ends up saving Wilbur’s life by writing special words about Wilburn in her web. Near the end of the story, Charlotte and Wilbur have this conversation:

“Why did you do all this for me?” [Wilbur] asked Charlotte. “I don’t deserve it. I’ve never done anything for you.”

“You have been my friend,” replied Charlotte. “That in itself is a tremendous thing.”

“Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It’s not something you learn in school. But if you haven’t learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven’t learned anything.” –America boxer and activist Muhammad Ali

“There is nothing better than a friend, unless it is a friend with chocolate.” – author Linda Grayson

Hymns:

When the Saints Go Marching In, p. 17

How Great Thou Art, p. 18

[sing more or fewer songs to fill out the time]

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

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to 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 of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise, p. 30

Extra Material:

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” by Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1855)

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.

“The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship. [The glory of friendship] is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship.” –Ralph Waldo Emerson