



Worship Service Theme: Abiding

Helpful elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

An empty balloon you can blow up with your breath

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Our theme today is **abiding**.

That's an interesting, almost an old-fashioned word, isn't it? When you *abide* with something or someone, what do you think that means? (You live with them, are close to them, etc.) We'll talk more about abiding throughout our service and see how it relates to a life of 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 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 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.

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 reading: From the gospel of John (chapter 15):

Jesus said to his disciples: “⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ...⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

This is the word 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: From Psalm 84 (verses 1-4, 10-12):

How lovely is your dwelling place,

O Lord of hosts!

²My soul longs, yes, faints

for the courts of the Lord;

my heart and flesh sing for joy

to the living God.

³Even the sparrow finds a home,

and the swallow a nest for herself,

where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.

⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house,
ever singing your praise! ...

¹⁰ For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

¹¹ For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows favor and honor.

No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.

¹² O Lord of hosts,
blessed is the one who trusts in you!

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

Interactive Homily: Let's talk a bit more about abiding.

- Let's review: I wonder what you think it mean to "abide"?
 - live with, dwell with, be with
 - Also, think about if you "can't abide" something; that means you *can't* live with it!
- And when something *is abiding*, like you have an abiding love for your children, what does that mean?
 - It lasts, is ongoing, permanent
- What sorts of things live with other things?
 - People! We live with families, spouses, children
 - Groups of animals: sometimes funny names 😊 (*ask if residents know any of these before revealing the word*)
 - a group of antelope or buffalo is called ... a herd
 - a group of ants is ... a colony

- a group of bees is ... a hive or swarm
 - a group of puppies is ... a litter
 - a group of cats is ... a clutter or a nuisance
 - a group of fish is ... a school
 - a group of geese is ... a gaggle
 - a group of hippos is ... a bloat
 - a group of hummingbirds is ... a charm
 - a group of rhinos is ... a crash
 - a group of zebras is ... a dazzle
 - and my favorite: a group of alligators is called ... a congregation of alligators (hmm, interesting church word!)
- When you're abiding, or living with someone you love, what does that *feel* like?
 - Spend time with them; be in their presence; shared experience and values
 - comfortable, safe, enjoyable, joyful, restful
 - The psalm I read talks about abiding with God this way: "How *lovely* is your dwelling place ... My soul *longs, yes, faints* for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh *sing for joy* to the living God." I wonder why the writer felt this way about being with God?
 - Knows that God is good!
- In John 15, Jesus talks about abiding by using the example of a vine and branches:
 - "The same way a branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me ...and apart from me you can do nothing."
- If a branch is broken off, sitting by itself on the ground, what's going to happen to it?
 - Doesn't last long; dries up
- How long does a branch last when it's attached to the vine?
 - Permanently! It's fed by the nourishment that comes through the vine.
- When we attach ourselves by faith to God, what happens? Where do we get our nourishment?
 - God sustains and encourages us, and causes us to grow and bear fruit.

Let's silently thank God for his abiding presence with us.

(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: A Balloon with Life¹

What does an empty balloon look like? **[show the balloon]** It looks limp, lifeless. It continues to lie wherever you put it. It doesn't move. It has no power.

Let's take a "dead balloon" and do what God does: blow his Spirit into it. **[blow up the balloon and hold it closed]** What happens? It's full of air. But is it moving, is it going anywhere while I hold it closed? The balloon goes nowhere until that power is released.

When we have God's Spirit breath in us, under the power of that breath, we move like a balloon that's released! We don't know where the balloon is going to go; but you know it's going somewhere. Shall we see where it goes? Ready? **[release the balloon upwards and watch it fly around! Can repeat this once or twice.]**

After Jesus' resurrection, he gave his followers the Spirit's power. Jesus did not intend his followers to stay behind locked doors in fear. God gives us the Spirit as power to move us out into the world – even if we don't always know exactly where we will end up.

Now, what happens when the balloon is empty again? Once again, it seems lifeless, out of power, flat, with no more "spirit/breath" within it. In that way we are *not* like the balloon: Jesus promises that God's Spirit will be with us and within us forever. But it's also true that every day, over and over again, God fills us up.

¹ modified from <http://www.sermonsplus.co.uk/illustrations.htm>

Daily we return to God (and weekly we return to church) to receive His breath of life and to go out where that life takes us.

Hymns:

It is Well with My Soul, p. 15

Amazing Grace, p. 16

Third Reading: Quotes on Abiding or Living with Others

Different plants thrive together in a well-nurtured garden. Just as they thrive, they pass on a message: God created us all to thrive with one another and planted love in our hearts for this reason. Let's learn to embrace each other, knowing Love is all we have to keep us growing and going. –relationship expert and author Kemi Sogunle

A friend is one soul abiding in two bodies. –Greek philosopher Diogenes

Living together is an art. It's a patient art, it's a beautiful art, and it's fascinating. – Pope Francis

When we are planted in [Christ's] truth, we sow seeds of clarity and peace. – Armesse Cheney, author of "Stay Here"

Hymns:

When the Saints Go Marching In, p. 17

How Great Thou Art, p. 18

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:

Psalms 27: 4-6

⁴One thing have I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to inquire in his temple.
⁵For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will lift me high upon a rock.