

# IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The Reverend Courtney Veazey  
Sunday, September 1, 2024

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Speak to us, living God,  
as you have spoken to our ancestors:  
through the voices of your prophets,  
the breath of your Spirit,  
and the life of Christ,  
so that we may live according to your word.  
Amen.

A reading from Proverbs.

‘Wisdom has built her house;  
she has hewn her seven pillars.  
She has slaughtered her animals; she has mixed her wine;  
she has also set her table.  
She has sent out her female servants; she calls  
from the highest places in the town,  
“You who are simple, turn in here!”  
To those without sense she says,  
“Come, eat of my bread  
and drink of the wine I have mixed.  
Lay aside immaturity and live,  
and walk in the way of insight.”’

Holy wisdom, holy word.  
**Thanks be to God.**

Almost exactly a year ago I found myself standing before a Gustav Klimt painting at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City.<sup>1</sup>

The painting features a majestic, pregnant woman with her head bowed, wrapped in a colorful cloak of swirling patterns. Death’s head peeks around her swollen uterus as a trio of women at her feet bow their heads with uplifted hands.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79792>

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As death threatens potential new life, there is a gathering, a protecting, a praying, a longing, a community eager for this new life to be safely born into the world.

A community eager for a metamorphosis to be made complete.

Curators call this painting's regal woman Hope, II.

Gustav called her Vision.

Perhaps we may call her Wisdom.

Wisdom also appears to us as a woman in this morning's Scripture lesson.

And Lady Wisdom has been diligently preparing to welcome us and serve us.

She has built her house.

She has hewn her pillars.

She has prepared her sumptuous feast.

She has set her table.

And in the verses leading up to what we read just a few moments ago, we learn that Lady Wisdom "was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth,"<sup>2</sup> and that Lady Wisdom "was playing before [God] always, playing in [God's] inhabited world and delighting in the human race."<sup>3</sup>

In the beginning was Wisdom. In the beginning was the Word.

Wisdom's preparation is ancient.

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<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 8:23 (NRSVUE)

<sup>3</sup> Proverbe 8:30-31 (NRSVUE)

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And her ancient preparation does not remain in the past, for she is actively, presently, emphatically calling to us, “Turn in here!”

Wisdom calls us – commands us – into a sacred space.

A sacred space of hearth, table, bread, and wine.

A sacred space of conversation and communion.

A sacred space that nourishes life even as death lurks.

A sacred space whose feast prepares us for the new life God is birthing through us – the body of Christ here on earth.

I imagine that we all encounter glimmers of this Wisdom – mirrors that reflect in part the holy Wisdom, the holy Word, who was present in the beginning.

My great aunt Laney died a few weeks ago, and when I reflect upon Wisdom’s presence at a table and Wisdom’s playful delight in serving those she loves, I remember Laney.

A glimmer of Lady Wisdom.

And in one of my favorite songs, Taylor Swift sings about her grandmother, Marjorie – another glimmer of Lady Wisdom who is not dead but who is so alive and still around as her memories and dreams live through her granddaughter.

These glimmers – these reflections – re-direct me to the clearest image of Lady Wisdom we will ever have – Jesus the Christ.

Paul’s first letter to the church in Corinth tells us that Christ is the Wisdom of God.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:24

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Lady Wisdom becomes incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, our Gate and King, our Shepherd and Truth, our Light and Way, our Bread and True Vine.

Jesus Christ, Lady Wisdom Incarnate, Son of God, hovers over the depths of our lives and our communities, notices our discomfort and confusion, calls to us in our hunger and thirst for good news, and responds to our souls' deepest needs by offering us her joyful feast.

If we, Idlewild, want to embody God's vision for this congregation – if we want to navigate upcoming changes well – it is imperative that we respond to Wisdom's command to enter her pillared house and feast together.

If we, Idlewild, want to better reflect God's image and fulfill God's assignment for us, we must first linger with Wisdom at her table and ingest all that she offers to us. Because Wisdom does not only point us forward, she is *the way* forward.

She has set her table. Turn in here, and luxuriate in her feast.

Turn from close-minded simplicity to open-minded curiosity.

Stop eating that which drains our souls and feast upon wholesome bread and wine.

Lay aside immaturity and pick up life – and not just any life – but abundant life that willingly journeys along the way of insight, understanding, and discernment. Life that plays in God's inhabited world and delights in community as we play and dine together. Life that is stable and strong because its foundation comes from Wisdom.

Dr. Christine Roy Yoder, a professor of biblical interpretation at Columbia Seminary, writes in her commentary on Proverbs that “to love [Wisdom] and to accept the invitation to [her] table is

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to awaken the interconnectedness of God's creation, to align with and participate in God's ongoing work in the world, and, as a result, to flourish."<sup>5</sup>

Our flourishing as the body of Christ begins with becoming intimately acquainted with Wisdom. It begins with Wisdom wrapping her colorful cloak around us as we sit at her feet with bowed heads and uplifted hands.

She has set her table. When have we last feasted with her?

Wisdom was present before we arrived here, is currently present, and will continue to be present. She was, and is, and is to come. When was the last time we accepted her invitation to the table?

When was the last time we recognized our interconnectedness as the body of Christ or actively aligned ourselves with God's work happening in us, through us, and among us?

When was the last time we entered Wisdom's house?

Theologians from the Middle Ages interpreted Lady Wisdom's building "a house for herself as an image of the incarnation, the divine Word [building] a body for himself."<sup>6</sup>

Wisdom has built her house.

Christ has built his body.

They have set their table.

Let us feast, and then walk together in the way of insight.

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<sup>5</sup> *Women's Bible Commentary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Proverbs, p. 236.

<sup>6</sup> Rein Bos, *Feasting on the Word*, Year B, Volume 3, p. 343.