

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The Reverend Courtney Veazey  
Sunday, June 15, 2025

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Prayer for Illumination

Living Word,  
you still have many things to say to us.  
Speak, and we will try to bear them.  
By your Word,  
may the Spirit guide us into all truth,  
that our lives may glorify you.  
Amen.

A reading from Proverbs.

“The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,  
the first of his acts of long ago.  
Ages ago I was set up,  
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.  
When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.  
Before the mountains had been shaped,  
before the hills, I was brought forth,  
when he had not yet made earth and fields  
or the world’s first bits of soil.  
When he established the heavens, I was there;  
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
when he made firm the skies above,  
when he established the fountains of the deep,  
when he assigned to the sea its limit,  
so that the waters might not transgress his command,  
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,  
then I was beside him, like a master worker,  
and I was daily his delight,  
playing before him always,  
playing in his inhabited world  
and delighting in the human race.”

A reading from the Gospel according to John.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me

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because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

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

Jesus’ words to us this morning come from the latter part of the Farewell Discourse –

a multi-chapter section of John’s Gospel in which Jesus washes the disciples’ feet and commands them to love one another; in which Jesus promises to not leave the disciples orphaned because God will give them the Advocate, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth who will abide with them and in them; in which Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” and “you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy.”

A multi-chapter section in which Jesus tries to answer the aching questions of a community that one homiletical scholar describes as “experiencing, in the span of a few decades, loss upon loss...[a community] experiencing absence, longing for presence, for clarity, for truth.”<sup>1</sup> A community wondering what to do when leadership departs.

The Farewell Discourse.

It is amazing how the Gospel reaches across time to tug at our hearts – how this eternal word speaks to our transient situation – connecting our Idlewild community with the Johannine community.

The Spirit of truth comes – enveloping both communities – uniting us in a sacred union that transcends time and place. They become us, and we become them.

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<sup>1</sup> *Connections*, Year C, Volume 3, David Schnasa Jacobsen, p. 14.

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Communities experiencing loss and absence – communities eager for a presence that offers service, love, advocacy, comfort, truth, peace, and joy.

Communities wrestling with farewells.

Idlewild – we know this language of farewell, of marking departures.

Over the last six weeks, our community said farewell to our senior pastor as he left for his sabbatical; we said farewell to our director of music ministry and our director of children and youth ministries as they moved to new cities and new calls; we said farewell to a deeply loved congregant who unexpectedly died; and eight weeks from now, I will say farewell to y'all during my last Sunday on August 10.

We are a community who needs Jesus' Farewell Discourse – a discourse that promises presence amid absence.

In this season of marking departures, we are deeply familiar with the spirit of farewell. I wonder though if we are also as familiar with the Spirit of truth.

A wise Spirit that meets us on the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads, and at the entrance of the portals we pass through as we move from what was to what shall be.<sup>2</sup>

A Spirit that the mystic Thomas Merton says represents “the reality of things” and the “joy of the cosmic dance,” which is always there, and which despair cannot alter or stain.<sup>3</sup>

A Spirit infused into all creation.

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<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 8:1-3

<sup>3</sup> As quoted in *The Universal Christ*.

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A Spirit present before any depths were brought forth or mountains shaped.

A Spirit present as God traced a circle on the face of the deep.

A Spirit playing and delighting in the world and in the human race.

A Spirit from God that became incarnate in Jesus Christ – the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

A Spirit that invites us to consider where in our grief delight and play may appear.

The 14<sup>th</sup> century visionary theologian Julian of Norwich wrote her book, *A Revelation of Love*, in a season laden with farewells as plague ravished her community and illness ravished her body.

During this heavy-laden season, she wrote “our soul must perform two duties.”

One is “...we must reverently wonder and be surprised. The other is we must gently let go and let be, always delighting in God.”<sup>4</sup>

Wonder. Surprise. Gentle release. Delight.

Light-hearted soul work – faithful spiritual practices – that bear us as we encounter things that we struggle to bear now.

Faithful spiritual practices that help us transform our common experiences of the flesh into treasures of grace.<sup>5</sup>

Our pain will turn into joy, our panic into hope.

Wonder. Surprise. Release. Delight.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://journeywithjesus.net/essays/3875-divine-delight>

<sup>5</sup> *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and in Christian Theology*, Ann Belford Ulanov, p. 192.

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Spiritual practices that help us embrace the paradoxes of our Christian faith and our life together as disciples of Christ.

The paradoxes of endings and beginnings. Pain and joy. Absence and presence. Death and resurrection.

Paradoxes which we need to be continually guided into by the Spirit of truth – the Spirit that makes visible the presence of God – a presence that was, is, and will be with us no matter how many farewells we experience.

As we navigate together farewells and departures, what causes wonder in our souls? What beauties fascinate us? What inspires us to explore and learn – to pursue curiosity and adventure? What surprises us? What do we brush against that doesn't align with our current understanding? What do we need to release – to let go and let be? And in what and whom do we delight?

Questions gently offered as guidance to our community – questions meant to be held together in communion with one another and with our mystic and wondrous triune God.

Questions that move us from absence to presence, from confusion to clarity.

Questions that dance with us as we wait for the Spirit of truth to guide us into all the truth.

Questions that help us play and delight in the new creation being shaped before us by our God.

Mary Oliver has a poem titled “Lines Written in the Days of Growing Darkness.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Devotions*, p. 49.

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I think this title is also appropriate for Jesus' Farewell Discourse.

Mary writes that "the vivacity of *what was* is married to the vitality of *what will be*."

Jesus knew the vivacity of what was, and to prepare the disciples for the vitality of what will be, our Savior offers them, and us, in the days of growing darkness lines upon lines upon lines of truth.

May we hear and digest this Spirit of truth that speaks across time.

May we consider the questions this Spirit of truth inspires.

And may we delight in our God as we practice wonder, surprise, and gentle release.