



SUMMER WORSHIP MONTREAT CONFERENCE CENTER

July 12, 2026, 10:30 a.m.
Anderson Auditorium

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."
— Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*

GATHERING

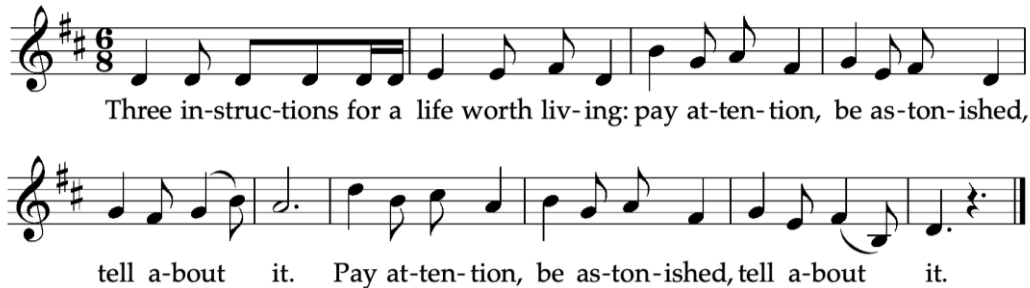
*Opening

based on Mary Oliver
music and additional text by Michaela English
tune: WOMSLEY

Three instructions for a life worth living:
pay attention, be astonished, tell about it.

In all things great and all things small, the Holy Spirit dwells.
See what's mundane, the smallest grain, and call it all divine!

all singing refrain:



How wonderful the highest Heavens are crammed right up to Earth.
What Moses saw, so pierced by awe, "I AM" burns in this place! *refrain*

Look to the trees, the telling leaves, press ear to holy ground.
Hear word proclaimed, hear sung refrain: "The realm of God is near!" *refrain*

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, Isaiah 35:5-6, 10
and the ears of the deaf unstopped,
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert.

The beloved of the Holy One shall return, and come with singing,
with crowns of everlasting joy.
They shall be overcome with joy and gladness,

Three poets speak to us this morning: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Mary Oliver, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. God's appearance to Moses is evoked in Browning's quatrain from *Aurora Leigh*.

This hymn was written by Ministry Team and choir member Michaela English, incorporating an excerpt from Mary Oliver's "Sometimes". Isaiah's famous vision of restoration follows. Both poet and prophet exhort us to wonder and gladness.

and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*Hymn 10 Sing Glory to the Name of God

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

*Confession and Pardon

Isaiah 43:1-2, 18-19, 25

This hymn text by David Gambrell is based on Psalm 29. Its images of God's presence are cast across the breadth of creation.

Silence

Holy God, you know us better than we know ourselves.
Forgive us.

Silence

Lord, have mercy on us. **Lord, have mercy on us.**

Holy God, you know us better than we know ourselves.
Heal us.

Silence

Christ, have mercy on us. **Christ, have mercy on us.**

Holy God, you know us better than we know ourselves.
Restore us.

Silence

Lord, have mercy on us. **Lord, have mercy on us. Amen.**

Friends, believe the good news: in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

*Hymn 582 Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me

*Peace

The peace of Christ be with you all. **And also with you.**

WORD

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Exodus 3:1-6

Holy wisdom, holy word.
Thanks be to God.

Scripture Luke 21:25-33

Sermon "What the Fig Tree Knows"

The Reverend Julie Pennington-Russell

RESPONDING

Hymn Pues si vivimos

SOMOS DEL SEÑOR

choir, then all:

**Pues si vivimos, para Él vivimos,
y si morimos para Él morimos.
Sea que vivamos,
o que moramos,
somos del Señor,
somos del Señor.**

This hymn (822 in *Glory to God*) is centered on Paul's claim in the book of Romans: that, living or dying, we are God's—*somos del Señor*. It also calls us to notice the people and needs around us.

*Affirmation

**We belong to God!
We belong to God!**

**In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**In a broken and fearful world,
the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Christ and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.
In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"**

**With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our
Lord.**

*Hymn 822 When We Are Living

SOMOS DEL SEÑOR

Prayers of the People

Offerings

I will be the gladdest thing under the sun;
I will touch a hundred flowers and not pick one.
I will look at cliffs and clouds with quiet eyes,
watch the wind bow down the grass, and the grass rise.
I will be the gladdest thing under the sun.

Edna St. Vincent Millay
Cynthia Gray

And when the lights begin to show up from the town,
I will mark which must be mine and then start down.

Millay's text is set here to music by Cynthia Gray. The poet gazes for the sake of wonder and awe.

*Hymn 742 We Will Walk with God

SIZOHAMBA NAYE

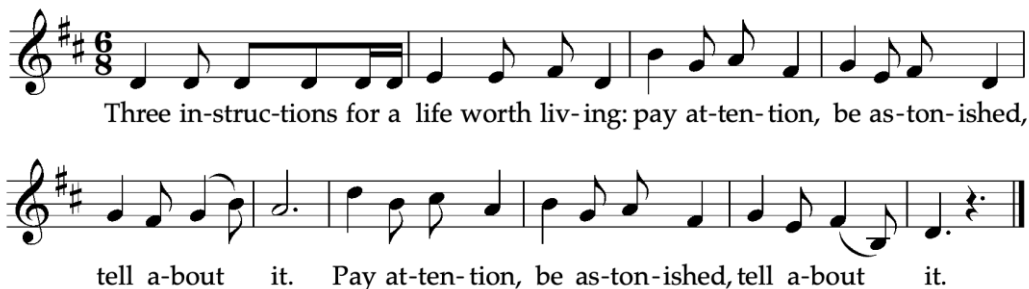
*Prayer of Thanksgiving

**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 debts as we forgive debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.
Amen.**

This exuberant hymn from Eswatini invites us to walk (shoed or shoeless? holy ground and all ground?) with the One who is the author of joy and whose realm is afire with righteousness.

SENDING

*Benediction and Charge



Three in-struc-tions for a life worth liv-ing: pay at-ten-tion, be as-ton-ished,
tell a-bout it. Pay at-ten-tion, be as-ton-ished, tell a-bout it.

No rolling hill nor cloud in sky knows bounds of "church" and "world".
Go from this place and seek God's face in every day divine!

*Voluntary In Thee Is Joy

J. S. Bach

Sources

Portions of the liturgy are reprinted or adapted by permission from the *Book of Common Worship*; © 2018 Westminster John Knox Press. All rights reserved. The hymn "Three Instructions" was written by Michaela English, a student at Columbia Theological Seminary and a member of our

summer staff ministry team. The refrain is drawn from “Sometimes” by Mary Oliver, which appeared in her collection *Red Bird*, © 2008, Beacon Press. The Prayer for Illumination is adapted from *The Book of Offices and Services of The Order of Saint Luke*, copyright © 2012 by The Order of Saint Luke. Used by permission of OSL Publications. (The Order of Saint Luke is an ecumenical religious order dedicated to sacramental and liturgical scholarship, education, and practice.)

Assisting in Worship

Richard DuBose, President, Montreat Conference Center

Meredith Gaines, Summer Staff

The Reverend Julie Pennington-Russell, Senior Minister,

First Baptist Church of the City of Washington, D.C.

The Reverend Carol Steele, Vice-President for Program, Montreat Conference Center

Summer Singers

Eric Wall, Conference Center Musician

Meredith Welfare, Summer Staff

Artist Statements



Hanging over the pulpit is the piece that I created based off the scripture texts for this morning – Exodus 3:1-6 and Luke 21:25-33 – and the overall message of noticing God in the here and now. Using the Hebrew word “Selah”, which shows up in many Psalms and signifies a pause, rest, or moment to notice and be present, I filled in the overall picture that I sketched out. By playing with the size, shape, color, and font that I wrote “Selah” in, I was able to create shading and dimension. I used sharpies for the entire piece. The piece features a broken chain, lilies (a reference to the “consider the lilies of the field” Bible passage), a mountain sunset with a waterfall, a line of rainbow paper dolls, and words such as “notice” and “pause”.

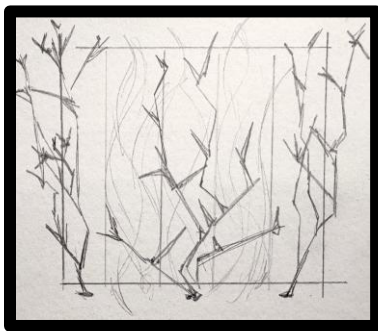
Like today’s sermon and scripture texts, my piece is an invitation to consider how we might live if we truly believe that God is not a far-off thing but a live, real entity that shapes every moment of our reality. When, where, and how can we see God in both the big picture and in the tiny details? What places and people do we

leave out when we think of ways that we can experience God? What might we see when we take a moment to pause, reflect, and notice?

- Meredith Welfare

Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up.”

(Exodus 3:3, NRSVUE)



The presence of God amidst the burning bush in our Exodus text for today’s worship service catches our attention like the attention of Moses. Earlier this summer, the banners expressed God’s way of being in this conversation with Moses. “I am that I am.” Today, the preceding verses emerge reminding us to trust that God accompanies our lives in the hard times. Created in dye, acrylic, and gutta resist on silk, this burning bush reminds us of the ever-presence of God. Sharp lines of the acrylic paint contrast with the softer flames expressed in dye on silk. Burning and continuing to burn but not burn out. Liturgist, Alec Peters, gave a Tuesday night summer lecture in the Arts, Music, and Theology Initiative at Convocation Hall a few years ago that pointed to the burning bush

as the most common visual expression of remnant Presbyterian faith communities beginning in fraught times and amidst hardship. It has emerged throughout centuries in signs, symbols, and logos of these churches who were beginning again in new stages and places—or changing tack with new direction in the same place. Here, the bush is painted in the plastic of acrylic paint, a material that is less flammable than other painting media. This day, the acrylic medium reiterates the idea that the remnant of God’s presence is ever in our midst.

Then God said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

(Exodus 3:5, NRSVUE)

Even when it seems that all else is on fire, pay attention, what is not burning amidst the flame?

- Hannah Garrity

WELCOME TO SUMMER WORSHIP IN MONTREAT

All have a home here as the family of God. In praise and prayer, joy and lament, scripture and preaching, arts and imagination, we are nourished by the sustaining grace and love of God offered to everyone. Montreat Conference Center is glad to welcome the congregations of the Montreat Presbyterian Church and the Black Mountain Presbyterian Church on Sunday mornings this summer.

HEARING LOOP: Anderson Auditorium is equipped with a hearing loop. To use this technology, a hearing aid must be set to "T". For best results, sit in sections closest to the walls.

CHILDCARE: for children two years of age through completed kindergarten is available today at the Updike Building from 10:15 a.m. until fifteen minutes after the conclusion of worship.



THIS MORNING'S OFFERING supports the worship ministry of Montreat Conference Center. Offerings may be placed in the offering basket or made electronically at www.montreat.org/SWO. Members of Montreat Presbyterian Church and Black Mountain Presbyterian Church may designate their regular contributions to those congregations by using the printed envelopes available in the lobby.

USHERS: We are grateful to this morning's ushers from Montreat Conference Center's Development Foundation Board.

HYMNALS: Congregational songs are found in Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal, located at the ends of the pews. Large-print bulletins include all hymn lyrics.

AFTER WORSHIP: You are invited to greet our preacher, the Reverend Julie PenningtonRussell, in front of the stage after worship. Rev. Pennington-Russell is the senior minister of First Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. From 2020-2025 Julie co-led the Clergy Spiritual Life and Leadership program for the Shalem Institute, and now co-leads Shalem's contemplative pilgrimage to Iona.

SUNDAY LUNCH is served at 11:45 a.m. in the Katherine McKay Belk Dining Room of Assembly Inn. Lunch is \$19.00 for adults (12+) and \$9.50 for children (5-11).

HYMN SINGS continue this Sunday evening at 7 pm in the Assembly Inn Lobby. Tonight's leaders are Bekah and Bill Caruso. Bekah is retired Coordinator of Children's Choirs (5!) and Director of 2nd-3rd grade choir at FPC-Nashville, TN. Her husband Bill is a retired church Educator.