

**Worship – October 2021**  
**Hymns: The Stories of**  
**our Faith**

**Opening Prayer**

Everlasting God, in the beauty of Your holiness we gather to worship You and to praise You for Your goodness and mercy. We offer

ourselves to You with all our faults and all our struggles with life's complexities, grateful that You open your arms with love and compassion to all in need of generous love and support. We come together today to gain strength, hope, and encouragement for life's journey from the Source of all power and strength – our God. Amen.



**Opening Hymn – Joyful Joyful we Adore Thee (UMH 89 vs 1)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FdPIkGQEVO>

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;  
Hearts unfold like flowers before thee, opening to the sun  
above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of  
doubt away. Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of  
day!

## **Prayers of Thanksgiving**

What are you thankful for today? (Congregants offer expressions of gratitude. After each expression, the congregation responds with “Thank you God!”). In response to these prayers of Thanksgiving, let us sing the Doxology:

*Doxology – Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow*

[https://youtu.be/pxg358xJ6\\_w](https://youtu.be/pxg358xJ6_w)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

## **Affirmation of Faith – John 3:16 (KJV)**

Let us affirm our faith by reading together this passage from the Gospel of John, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

## **Hymn - Love Divine All Loves Excelling (UMH 384 vs 1)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nP1H-wGfG-4>

1. Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down; fix in us thy humble dwelling; all thy faithful mercies crown! Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art; visit us with thy salvation; enter every trembling heart.

## **Scripture- Isaiah 41:10 (NRSV)**

“Do not fear, for I am with you,  
do not be afraid, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”

## Devotional<sup>1</sup>

Our hymn of focus for October is “How Firm a Foundation.” There is little background information on this hymn. In fact, the author of this hymn remains a mystery. We know that “How Firm a Foundation” was first published in 1787 in a hymnbook edited by John Ribbon, *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors*. In the hymnbook, the hymn was only attributed to “K.” Many speculations have been discussed as to who might have written the hymn, yet the author remains a mystery. The composer of the tune of the hymn is also unknown.

While little information exists about the compilation of this beloved hymn, we do know “How Firm a Foundation” has been a great source of comfort for many persons over the years. Hymnologist William Reynolds notes that it was a favorite hymn of Theodore Roosevelt, that Andrew Jackson requested it be sung at his deathbed, and that Robert E. Lee asked for it to be sung at his funeral.

This hymn has also been a source of unity and peace. A story which speaks into this unity building occurred on Christmas Eve of 1898 during the American-Spanish War, as an entire corps of the United States Army joined together in singing this hymn. The experience was shared with *The Sunday-School Times* in 1901 by Lieutenant-Colonel Curtis Guild, Jr.:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Research for devotional came from these two sites: 1) Dr. Michael C. Hawn. “History of Hymns: How Firm a Foundation” *UMC Discipleship.org*, June, 2013. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-how-firm-a-foundation> Accessed September 2021. 2) “Hymn Story: How Firm a Foundation” *Reasonable Theology.org*. <https://reasonabletheology.org/hymn-story-how-firm-a-foundation/> Accessed September 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Benson, Louis. *Study of Familiar Hymns*. The Westminster Press, 1903.

“On Christmas eve of 1898 I sat before my tent in the balmy tropical night [near Havana] chatting with a fellow-officer of Christmas and home. Suddenly from the camp of the Forty-ninth Iowa rang a sentinel’s call, “Number ten; twelve o’clock, and all’s well!”

“It was Christmas morning. Scarcely had the cry of the sentinel died away, when from the bandsmen’s tents of that same regiment there rose the music of an old, familiar hymn, and one clear baritone voice led the chorus that quickly ran along those moonlit fields: ‘How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord!’ Another voice joined in, and another, and another, and in a moment the whole regiment was singing, and then the Sixth Missouri joined in, with the Fourth Virginia, and all the rest, till there, on the long ridges above the great city whence Spanish tyranny once went forth to enslave the New World, a whole American army corps was singing” – “Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed; For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid; I’ll strengthen thee, help thee and cause thee to stand, Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.”

“Protestant and Catholic, North and South were singing together on Christmas day in the morning – now that’s an American army!”

What struck me about this story was how this hymn, at least briefly, united the troops of the American Army. The Spanish-American War came about 30 years after the end of the Civil War, and tensions between the North and South were still high.

However, on that Christmas Morning in 1898, differences were put on hold and American soldiers unified to sing this beloved hymn. What an inspiring story that remains pertinent today. As Americans we often do not agree with our neighbors on many things, how beautiful though when we can band together on the central promises of God as heard in this hymn and as written in Isaiah 41:10 (which is quoted in verse 2):

- God walks with us each day. Give your anxiety and fears to God, for God loves and cares deeply for you.
- God will provide strength and aid through all of life's journeys. Keep turning to God:
  - Spend time daily in prayer with God – ask that the Holy Spirit, the source of true peace, would fill you anew.
  - Spend time in Scripture – highlight favorite Scriptures that fill you with hope and comfort and that you can turn to for comfort and strength.

Question for discussion: What is a favorite Scripture verse you turn to on a hard day?

Let us now sing together of these amazing promises from God:

**Hymn – *How firm a Foundation* (UMH 529 vs 1 and 2)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0plwESLhGwY>

1. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent word! What more can he say than to you he hath said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?
2. "Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed, for I am thy God and will still give thee aid; I'll strengthen and help thee, and cause thee to stand upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

## **Favorite Hymns**

### **Hymn – *He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought* (UMH 128 vs 1)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rkwuRolZHU>

1. He leadeth me: O blessed thought! O words with heavenly comfort fraught! Whate'er I do, where're I be, still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Refrain: He leadeth me, he leadeth me, by his own hand he leadeth me; his faithful follower I would be, for by his hand he leadeth me.

### **Hymn – *Amazing Grace* (UMH 378 vs 1, 2 and 6)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogxLNlgKM8c>

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.
6. When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

### **Hymn – *Blessed Assurance* (UMH 369 vs 1)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6cOOLTDAaQ>

1. Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain: This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long; this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

## **Communion Liturgy**

We have come to the time in our service to remember Holy Communion. From Matthew 26, I would remind you that at the Last Supper “While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”



## **Communion Prayer**

We are not able to physically take Communion today so please hear this prayer as a reminder of this important sacrament:  
My Jesus, we believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. We love you above all things and long for you in our soul. Since we cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into our hearts. We adore Thee in the Sacrament of Thy love. Amen.

## **The 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, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

## **Closing Hymn – God be with You till We Meet Again (UMH 672 vs 1)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xpez5ncMZ2Y>

1. God be with you till we meet again; by his counsels guide, uphold you, with his sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again.

Refrain: Til we meet, till we meet, till we meet at Jesus' feet; till we meet, till we meet, God be with you till we meet again.

## **Closing Prayer**

The following song speaks of the importance of God's presence, particularly as we face trials in life. As we say or sing these words, may we remember that God is always with us and may we prayerfully ask for God's comforting presence to be ever felt:

*Kum Ba Yah* (come by here) – UMH 494

1. Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah. Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah. Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum ba yah. Oh, Lord, kum ba yah!

2. Someone's praying Lord, kum ba yah. Someone's praying Lord, kum ba yah. Someone's praying Lord, kum ba yah, Oh, Lord, kum ba yah!

## **Benediction (Romans 15:13)**

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

