

**BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI**  
**THE WORSHIP OF GOD • JULY 21, 2019**  
**“THE GOSPEL ON BROADWAY”**

**Litany**

Based on Psalm 34

We will bless the Lord at all times! I have sought the Lord and God answered me.

**Together we lift God’s name on high!**

When I was suffering, I cried out to God in my trouble, and the Lord listened.

**On every side, the Lord’s Spirit protects those who honor God.**

Let us pray:

**We taste and see that you are good, O God.**

**We seek you and lack no good thing. Amen.**

**The Scripture**

Isaiah 41:4-10

*Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, am first, and will be with the last. The coastlands have seen and are afraid, the ends of the earth tremble; they have drawn near and come. Each one helps the other, saying to one another, “Take courage!” The artisan encourages the goldsmith, and the one who smooths with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, “It is good”; and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved. But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off”; 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.*

**The Message**

***Walk on with Hope***

**Terry Overfelt**

**The Musical: *Carousel* – “You’ll Never Walk Alone”**

**Big Love:** God has come with us through the storms of life. God gives us hope so that we will act in hope and hold on into the next beginning.

**An Introduction to the musical *Carousel* and the song “You’ll Never Walk Alone”**

The plot of the musical *Carousel* is filled with hopelessness crying for redemption. Love, jealousy, abuse, bad choices, death, purgatory, and redemption are all on the

plot line. Richard Rogers, of Rogers and Hammerstein, wrote that *Carousel* is one of his favorites of all his musicals. It is a rather dark theme.

Carousel barker Billy Bigelow is a womanizer. He is used by the carousel owner for his handsome looks to draw the young girls to buy a ride. He has a romance with Julie Jordan that costs them both their jobs. Billy participates in a robbery to provide for Julie and their unborn child; but it goes tragically wrong. Julie holds the dying Billy, and after he has breathed his last, the old renown song is sung over him, "You'll Never Walk Alone."

On the other side of heaven, the admitting angel tells him that he has not done enough good on Earth to get in (ah, "works" theology) but that he could go back to Earth in spirit form and do more to qualify if he wanted to do so. When he was alive, he hit Julie and even in heaven when confronted with this, he says he isn't sorry for anything. He explains, when we fight and she is right, I hit her. In meeting his daughter now in the spirit, 15 Earth years and one heavenly minute later, he is still hitting, he wills himself visible to her and then argues with her about her "father's" bad reputation of being a thief and a wife beater. She says his actions, as his daughter, have made her an outcast from society these 15 years.

There is a controversial scene where Louise asks her mom if it makes any sense that a hit can feel like a kiss, and her mother says she believes that's possible. This is a painful message for those who are enduring domestic violence. This is painful for those who have been used and only know how to act out in violence when they can't have the upper hand. The plot continues to Louise's high school graduation. Remorseful, Billy, now invisible, whispers to Louise, telling her to believe the words that the commencement speaker shares: The bad or good that your parents do is not you. Yours is to create your own life and the music begins of the old song, "You'll Never Walk Alone." She reaches out to another girl and learns she does not have to be an outcast. Billy's spirit then goes to Julie, telling her, at last, that he loved her. As Julie and Louise join in the singing, Billy is taken to his heavenly reward.

## **The Message**

### The Message Begins with Choosing

In this week's illustration of the Gospel on Broadway, we are looking at the 1945 American Classic, *Carousel*. Today's song is sung twice, the first is when the main character dies and the song is sung in hope for his next journey and for those he leaves behind. The second time it is sung is when the same character, in his spirit, can whisper hope and love to those who he harmed.

Many of us have sensed this healing and hope even after we have lost someone. This is a difficult musical and the characters walk through many storms.

Why choose this show? Well I don't necessarily need signs and wonders to believe, but they are all around us if we recognize them and this musical option kept coming up. *The Gospel Goes to Broadway* is a book Kay pointed me to early on in our selection process. The last entry was *Carousel*, and the only one in the entire book that we ended up using.

I was leaving church one night and the Columbia Chorale was rehearsing **this** song as I passed through the Narthex.

As if two signs weren't enough, at Lakota Coffee Shop, a trendy stop, at 6:30 a.m. that same week, guess what was playing in the overhead music...yep, "You'll Never Walk Alone." I told Shelly, my walking buddy, that I'd just been hummed upside the head with a divine choosing. Not one of the other ten songs in this series was so persistent. When I look at the events of this past week, I see why.

Will you pray with me?

God of Hope, as we listen for you in the word and the world, may the ponderings in our lives help us to see you and one another. May we know ourselves to carry and deliver hope. Amen.

## Hope

What is hope? One evening when I was mourning one so dear's next fall from sobriety, I cried softly, "He's going to die addicted, it's hopeless." God surprised me, saying in the still, small way, "Hope is mine." Hope is a spiritual gift.

If our hearts had a manual, a listed function would be "hope" and its extended warranty. Whether we are sad or glad in the many changes in our lives and what they mean to us, hope is the darn and the charm that keeps us moving. When it is a storm we are facing, hope moves us forward whispering, "You'll get through this, "even sacredly, "We'll get through this."

Hope gives us a confidence of God's being in this with us and most importantly, God's intention to restore. The song sings of walking on through the tossing and blown-ness of dreams, and the hope that we will come out on the other side to a golden sky and the sweet silver song.

Scholar and theologian N.T. Wright says this of the sense of temporariness or transience in life's storms.

*“God given transience is a signpost pointing not from the material world to a non-material world but from the world as it is to the world as it is meant one day to be-pointing in other words from the present to the future God has in store.”*

His book is entitled, *Surprised by Hope* (p.95)

Living as Christ followers is to hope in the kingdom. Walk on in, and through and beyond. The clichéd lyric of chin or head held high, well, that is hope.

God's first response to creation is, “It is good.” We are partners in hope for the goodness of earth being as it is in heaven. “Thy will be done!” So, these are the threads that are being whispered in the play's setting in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, and they are ours, too.

### ***Hope is trending all around us, can you hear it?***

Isaiah 41:4-10 is a word of hope to the Israelites, who suffer captivity, exile, and darkness for 70 years. Isaiah and the two other voices, who completed this 66-chapter book, are each reminding the people that God is still with them. Through the cultural and personal torment, God is remaining faithful to them.

When they stubbornly refuse to hope in God, they turn away toward ritual magic and political strategizing. Isaiah 41 overflows with hope-filled promises of divine comfort and restoration. Even though they have become a servant people, they are called to serve the whole of humanity in purposes greater than any they could imagine. Isaiah is calling the Israelites to co-create in hope for God's redeeming love in the world.

### The Wild Goose

Co-create was the theme of the Wild Goose Festival in Hot Springs, North Carolina last week. Taby, Barbara, Martha, and I went from Broadway. We were nested in the Appalachian foothills, alongside the raging French Broad River, warmed by the hot springs and the blanket of low clouds that are the signature of the Smoky Mountains. We joined in a progressive gathering of liberal theologians celebrating spirit, justice, music, and art. We were Christian in its many sects, including Catholic, as well as other religions: Hindu, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Atheist, and Gender-full.

The messages were as sundry, inclusive, and outspoken as this faith diversity. We sang old hymns, cheer-sing, in a giant tent long after dark. With 120-ish workshops and time to attend six-ish a day, “There was more to see than can ever be seen, more

to do than can ever be done.” (so sayeth the Lion King.)

For many, the Wild Goose is spiritual home. When they are away, they do indeed feel “homesick” in longing. Instead of sickness, they coin the term, “home-hope.” Hope is what we experienced there as we joined in co-creating a world in which we want to live.

I want to share three of the mainstage messages with you. Curiously, when I was looking over the programming for this week’s General Assembly for the Disciples of Christ in Des Moines, I saw the same threads of hope there, too.

So, I would like to point to some trending themes of hope in the musical *Carousel*, The Wild Goose, The General Assembly, and the Scripture. God is opening our eyes to see Hope Trending.

### **The first thread of hope is one for home**

For *Carousel*, Home-hope was missing for Billy, who was being greedily used for his looks to attract riders for the Carousel. When falling in love cost him his job and made him desperate to support his family, his choices were deadly, leaving his dependents cast out from society and home.

Hope for home was spoken at the Wild Goose: Sunday morning, a once Pentecostal Pastor walked us out of Eden with a fresh insight that said, the God ,who created a home for Adam and Eve in goodness, loved them so much and went looking for them when they hid in shame. God clothed them saying, “You cannot stay where you will be caught in the strangling triangle of lies, temptation and shame; trees, fruit, and fig leaves.

“And hold on a minute, says God, let me get my backpack, I’m going with you.”

Emmanuel, God with us – was always the sacred intention. God going to a new home with us when we lose our way. Wonderful insights from Reverend Stan Mitchell.

Hope for home, acted upon at the General Assembly in *Resolution 1925, Addressing the State of Global Forced Migration*. A total of 68.5 million people has been forcibly displaced from their homes globally for reasons of war, violence, persecution, climate change, economic injustice, impoverishment, colonialism and its legacy, and exploitation, among others. This resolution seeks to address all aspects of international migration, including humanitarian development as an important contribution to global governance and enhanced coordination.

Isaiah 41: 8-9: “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off.’”

### **The second thread of hope is for a listening community.**

This is Billy Bigelow, wanting to go from heaven back to earth to have another chance at bringing goodness to those he damaged – even one before she was born. He comes hoping for her to hear that the failures and successes of her father are not hers. He tries to give her a guiding star he’s polished, but she will not listen.

Friday morning, Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor told of the surprise when she began teaching a world-religions class, and instead of academically researching and respecting the many paths to God, she fell in love with each expression and its believers. Some, who could not honor her deep reverence for others, dropped the class.

General Assembly will address hope for community in *Resolution 1926: Spirit of Active Listening*. We live with current disagreements over such issues as gun control, immigration, health care, civil rights, and the age is particularly divisive with people not listening to one another. This resolution will call the church to hear and listen to all voices present, as we respect our brothers and sisters in faith, free of judgment and preconceived notions, recognizing and accepting our common humanity.

Isaiah 41: 4-6: “Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, am first, and will be the last. The coastlands have seen and are afraid, the ends of the earth tremble, they have drawn near and come, each one helps the other, saying to one another, ‘Take Courage!’”

### **This last thread, the hope to end violence.**

This is an illustration that parallels Billy Bigelow’s hitting those, who think differently than him, and disturbingly, those who are closest to him, especially when he senses they are right. Saturday morning, Rev. William Barber lifted his prophetic voice calling us all to a Moral Pentecost. “We must unite. Right Here! Right Now!”

He looked over the crowd and told us we could do it. God moves faster than any molecular structure, and that’s why Jesus can enter rooms through closed doors. The Holy Spirit gives power to speak, so that everyone will hear and hope together for the treatment of the poor, the women, the children, the stranger, and the least of these.

*Resolution 1928 is a Call to See and Respond to the Crisis of Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence* on being a voice and a shelter against and to heal through increase of spiritual support to shatter shame, stigma, and silence by preaching and teaching responsibility. The resolution calls for creating safe sanctuary spaces for abuse specific pastoral care. Working to dismantle a cultural landscape where domestic violence can thrive and hide.

Isaiah 41:10: “I have chosen you and not cast you off 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.”

My head spun the common threads this week. God’s hope is being spoken from ages long past, through this one and into the next as we build the kingdom on earth.

Sacred hope is spoken through musicals, theologians, denominations, and Scripture, as we walk on through the transient storms of our lives. We hope for homes, for listening hearts, for an end to violence.

Through the arts, the theologians, our denomination, and the Sacred Word – we see the golden sky. “Hope is trending,” sings the lark.

### **The Benediction**

What are your storms? What are your hopes? What are you hoping for the sake of others? Know God is walking with us, lifting our heads in hope, as our gift and our gift to others. Walk on. Amen.