



First United Methodist Church of Hanford

“The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.”



A Reconciling Congregation

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Pastor: Rev. Pastor Pablo R. Vargas
Music Director: Cavan O'Neill
Lay Worship Leader: Bob Junell
Sunday Worship Service - 4.26.2026

Words of Welcome & Announcements

Centering Time (Preparing Our Hearts & Minds for Worship)

Opening Prayer- Lay Worship Leader

Almighty, all-merciful God, through Christ Jesus, you have taught us to love one another, to love our neighbors as ourselves, and even to love our enemies. As we gather for worship and as we are sent from this place, let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. Help us to encounter each person in light of the love and grace you have shown us in Christ. Establish among us a future where peace reigns, justice is done with mercy, and all are reconciled. We ask these things in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Responsive Call to Worship

Family of God, who are you?

We are disciples formed in the image of Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Family of God, how does Jesus form you?

By loving us and showing us how to love.

Family of God, how does the Holy Spirit empower you?

By loving us and inspiring us to love others as Christ loves us.

Family of God, on this journey of faith, we are not alone—God is with us!

We come to worship God, who shows us how to love and calls us to boldly love God and neighbor, that we may be disciples of Jesus Christ who transform the world. Amen.

Reading 1 (Carly will recite the Shema in Hebrew): Deuteronomy 6:4-9

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” (UMH 384)

Passing the Peace of Christ (with hugs, handshakes, bumps, etc.)

Pastoral Welcome and Prayer

Reading 2 (Emma reads) Leviticus 19:9-18

“The Wreckless Love of God” -Praise Team

**** “Children are dismissed to “Godly Play” at this time****

Scripture Reading- Mark 12:28-34 (NRSV)

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”³² “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him.³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

(Reader: This is the Word of our Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**)

Sermon: “What’s Agape Got to do With It?”

-Pastor Pablo R. Vargas

Pastor’s Notes

- 1- The language of **love**: In the Greek text, the word used for “love” is **ἀγαπάω** (*agapaō*), from the noun **ἀγάπη** (*agapē*). It is a self-giving, covenantal love—love that acts for the good of the other, even at cost to oneself.
 2. The **unity of love**- Jesus does not separate these commandments. He binds them together. As theologian Karl Barth famously wrote, “Love of God and love of neighbor are not two different things, but one and the same.”
 3. “Not Far from the Kingdom”: The tragedy of nearness. Jesus tells the scribe, “*You are not far from the kingdom of God.*” The Greek phrase here is **οὐ μακρὰν εἶ** (*ou makran ei*)—literally, “you are not far.” Scholars suggest that what the scribe lacks is not knowledge, but **participation**.
 4. From **Understanding to Embodiment**: it is possible to be near—to understand the right answers, to affirm the right doctrines, to attend church regularly—and still not fully live in the kingdom of God. The kingdom is not just about what we believe. It is about how we live everyday and the choices we make.
- So what would it look like for us—not just to be near the kingdom—but to live in it?**
It might look like: Reaching out to someone who is isolated, choosing generosity over comfort, a food pantry, washing people’s feet or washing their clothes (Laundry Love), feeding people (Food Pantry and Food Distribution), advocating for peace and justice, advocating for those whose voices are not heard.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

With hope for God's mercy and trust in God's love, let us admit the truth of our lives, first in silent prayer.

Silent prayer

Unison Prayer

There are times, O God, when our greatest sin is not what we do but what we fail to do. For those times when we have not spoken up; for those times when we have not acted; for those times when we have not responded: forgive us. Give us courage to name what is wrong when we see it. Give us confidence to do what is hard. Give us grace to reach out when that is frightening or uncomfortable. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

New every morning is God's love for us, and so we are bold to proclaim the Good News: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!**

"They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love" TFWS-2223 (first 3 versus)

Invitation to Give Our Tithes and Offering and Unison Prayer

Gracious Commander of Love, you have taught us what love looks like, and you have commanded us to live it. In a world that rewards fear and self-interest, you call us to give boldly, to serve generously, and to risk loving with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Receive these offerings as signs of our obedience and as seeds of a kingdom where welcome is wide, grace is abundant, and love never holds back. We give, not from obligation, but from the joy of being shaped by your love. In Christ's name, Amen.

Offertory (Praise Team and Choir)

Doxology

Benediction (Stay Afterwards for Coffee Hour)