

“Circle of Life”  
Rev. Joyce Kirk-Moore

Matthew 21:1-11

Palm Sunday, March 28, 2010  
San Dimas Community, United Church

The song Natalie sang for us, “Circle of Life,” is both a popular and a spiritual song. Today on Palm Sunday we recognize that Jesus and these confirmands and all of us are part of the circle of life. ***It's the circle of life, and it moves us all through despair and hope, through faith and love. Till we find our place on the path unwinding, in the circle, the circle of life.***

Today we remember Jesus' journey on his path unwinding into Jerusalem. And we honor these confirmands' path unwinding into adulthood. This image of being taken up into this circle of life and creation where we are moved through despair, hope, faith, and love is a powerful one. As people of faith, we seek to find our place on this path unwinding, our place within God's circle of life.

You likely have seen the movie or stage show: *The Lion King*. In the film while this theme song is sung, we see the ritual of the lion cub being taken to the mountain top and presented as the future king of the pride.

Similarly, a ritual drama occurs in today's gospel text. As Jesus enters Jerusalem to be presented as King and Messiah, the people sing loud hosannas. And today we, too, participate in a ritual as we celebrate these confirmands and present them to this community as adult members of San Dimas Community Church, United Church of Christ, and as our partners as we are moved by the Holy Spirit and by one another through God's circle of life.

Let us for a moment, imagine Jesus on his path unwinding. He mounted the donkey and traveled the path around the Mount of Olives, reenacting through this ritual how prior Jewish kings had processed into Jerusalem for their coronation, to the shouts of “Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” But Jesus' path led him to a different throne, not the throne of king David, but the throne of the cross. The people shouting “Hosanna” that day wanted Jesus' path to lead to a new Jewish nation, but it was not to be. For Jesus' place in the circle of life was to be an expression of the greatest power in the world, God's creating and redeeming love. Jesus knew who he was and was determined to be faithful to his identity as he traveled his path unwinding. And because he remembered he was faithful to his calling, today, over 2000 years later, we remember him.

Today this community presents and confirms into full membership and ministry six young people to take their place in the circle of life within San Dimas Community Church, United Church of Christ. From time to time there may be the danger for us as their faith community to shout “hosannas” to who we think these youth are or who we think they should be. The challenge is for us to be good listeners and hear from them how they see their place in our life together. These are the young people who today we receive into the family of San Dimas United Church of Christ:

Lauren Ashley Button is an 8th grader and next year will attend San Dimas High School. Lauren has participated in youth activities and will join the group going to Montana for the Western Regional Youth Event this summer. Though she is quiet, she is a good friend, enjoys working on the school yearbook, has played soccer and wants to take dance. She hopes to one day go to cosmetology school. We hope, Lauren, that you will feel encouraged to let your light shine. We honor who you are and who you will become.

Danielle Theresa Chin, you have known both joy and sorrow within this church. We celebrated your mother's life in this sanctuary and now we welcome your new step-family. You, Danielle, have many gifts, and we pray that you will find ways to express your musical talents,

your gifts with children, and the empathy that is deep within your heart. You are blessed with many people who love you as you find your path in the circle of life, and we pray that God will bless and keep you always.

David Michael Chin, you, too, have known joy and sorrow within this faith community, a community that loves you and is here to support and help you. You have a good sense of humor and are accepting of others. People are drawn to you to be your friend. You have great artistic abilities. We have confidence that you are capable of doing many things, and we pray that you will press on with courage and hard work to make your dreams come true.

Melissa Nicole Fine, we admire you. You are out-going and you know the importance of relationships. You ask questions; you are energetic and joyful. When you dance, we are drawn into your circle of joy. You have courage and a deep understanding of others. We are glad that you represent us on the Conference Youth Round Table, and we support your leadership. It has been wonderful to watch you grow up in this church family, and we look forward with great anticipation to where your life's path will take you.

Dylan Carter Seaver, God blessed us the day your family found our church! "Quiet waters run deep," and you have a depth of mind, body, and soul expressed through many gifts. You observe your world and though you are not judgmental you think and discern about important issues. You are accomplished in your studies, as an athlete, in ROTC, as a leader, but even more important, you are a loving and caring person. You inspire us with your music and your adventurous spirit. To whom much is given, much is required. We know your life will be a blessing to the world as it has been a blessing to us.

Danielle Christine Whitfield, you have many of the wonderful qualities of your grandmother, for whom you are named. You are compassionate, kind, polite, and smart. You have shown much courage and tenderness as you lived with and helped care for your grandmother while she was ill. I will never forget your attentiveness to her. You are determined to keep your faith all your life, and we celebrate you and are glad to share life's journey.

Though we celebrate these young people today, theirs and our paths are not always easy or without challenge. Remember that in *The Lion King* the turning point in the story is when Simba, the cub who would be king is afraid to go home. He feels ashamed; he fears being made fun of; he wonders if he will be accepted as king after his actions have caused much harm to the animal kingdom. Simba is defeated and feels he can never go home, and then in the night sky, he sees a vision of his father. And the vision says this: "Simba, remember who you are, remember." The vision God offers us is the same: "Remember who you are, you are created by God, you belong to the circle of life. Remember."

Confirmation class of 2010 we welcome you today, and we encourage you to always remember who you are. Our path may unwind in unexpected ways. And when the path we're on is hard, all we ask of you is this: Remember who you are, you are recognized this day as full members of this church, you are cherished, you are not alone.

Remember and never forget that here you will always belong, and you will always be loved by a great love that knows no beginning and no end. AMEN