

ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH
A UNITED METHODIST/PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) COMMUNITY
WILDE LAKE INTERFAITH CENTER • COLUMBIA, MARYLAND
UNITED IN LOVE – UNITED FOR SERVICE

May 7, 2023

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER // IN-PERSON & ONLINE SERVICE

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Liturgist: Patsy Nwagbaraocha

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WE GATHER IN GOD'S NAME

PRELUDE

Patricia Hammer
Accompanist

WORDS OF WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING SONG

“God of Grace and God of Glory”

GTG #307

God of grace and God of glory,
on thy people pour thy power;
crown thine ancient church's story;
bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.

Cure thy children's warring madness;
bend our pride to thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore.
Let the gift of thy salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving thee whom we adore,
serving thee whom we adore.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, people of God! Take refuge in the Lord, who listens when we cry out,
who rescues us when we call, and who leads and guides us according to his unfailing love.

You are our God; our lives are in your hands.

Let's worship God together! Amen.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We confess that we have not loved you as you command us to love. We have not relied on you as our refuge, choosing instead to seek comfort in busyness and distractions. We have not trusted that only when we put ourselves in your hands can we find peace the peace we crave.

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

We confess that we have not loved our neighbors as you command us to love. We buy into the myth that it's every person for themselves. We ignore the pain of those around us. We refuse your call to care for the poor and the marginalized.

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

We confess that we do not answer your call to steward creation. We look upon the earth as something to consume instead of tend. We point fingers at others instead of doing what is ours to do. We choose comfort over responsibility.

Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

(silence is kept)

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

Adapted from Psalm 31 NRSVUE by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, October 2022.

Hear these words:

When we call, God inclines an ear to us and comes quickly to help us. God's love is steadfast to rescue us and redeem us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Peter 2:2 – 10

ANTHEM

"Hear My Voice, O Lord"
Charles H. Gabriel; Civilla D. Martin
arranged by Mark Hayes

SJU Chancel Choir

Why should I feel discouraged?
Why should the shadows come?
Why should my heart be lonely?
And long for my heaven and home

When Jesus is my portion
My constant friend is He
His eye is on the sparrow
And I know He watches me

I sing because I'm happy
I sing because I'm free
For His eye is on the sparrow
And I know He watches me

Whenever I am tempted
Whenever clouds arise
When songs give place to sighing
When hope within me dies

I draw the closer to Him
From pain He sets me free
His eye is on the sparrow
And I know He watches me

I sing because I'm happy
I sing because I'm free
For His eye is on the sparrow
And I know He watches me

SCRIPTURE READING

John 14:1 – 14

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Into God's Wonderful Light

Rev. Mary Ka Kanahan

MESSAGE

"LIKE LIVING STONES"

Rev. Mary Ka Kanahan

CALL TO GENEROSITY

Receive these gifts this morning, O God, author of every good gift. Out of the bounty of our hearts, we respond with faithful generosity and love. May these gifts become blessings for others as they have been blessing for us. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to The Lord's Table

<https://enfleshed.com/liturgy/lgbtq-related/> adapted by Rev. Kanahan for May 2, 2023.

The Holy One be with you.

And also with you.

Open your hearts to the One who is Love.

We open our hearts to you, O God.

Let us give thanks to God who takes risks for love.

For the courage of the Holy that lives in us, we give thanks.

Throughout history, O God, we have struggled to remember who we are. When forces of evil work to shape our understanding of you, ourselves, and one another, we get lost. We hide parts of ourselves. We keep the things that make us vulnerable buried deep. We cling to security and safety. We turn from meaningful connection with one another. We take cover under the patterns of our culture.

But you have created us for so much more. In Jesus we saw a life lived in all its potential. Life that is abundant, life that is collective, life that is tender and full, and so we honor Him, saying:

Holy! Holy! Holy Lord! God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed are those who come in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

But we saw, also, in him, what can happen to a life when power and norms are exchanged for truth, collective justice, and integrity. And so we wonder. If we live true to our authentic selves, will we be condemned?

In proclaiming truths that confront unjust power, do we stand a chance of survival? How will it go for us, if we are willing to risk everything for love? You have never promised us safety, but you have shown us what is possible.

The Spirit brings new life even to places of death. Jesus, knowing the dangers ahead, kept proclaiming his truth. There was nothing worth his silence, not even his life. And so he turned to community for companionship in the struggle.

On the night of his arrest, he gathered around table with his companions. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” He did the same with the cup after the supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out is the new covenant.”

In Jesus, God came out to the world, challenging systems and norms. And though great violence was done and unfathomable loss was felt, Love presses on still today, transforming life after life. Therefore, let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

And so we pray, pour out your Spirit on us gathered here, and on this bread and this cup. Make them be for us, the body and blood of Christ. Through these gifts, unite us with you and all, and fill our hearts with courage to live boldly for one another, proclaiming the truths that set us free. Blessed be this meal of hope. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer...

The Breaking of the Bread and Sharing of the Cup

COMMUNION SONG #1 “Lead Me Lord” (Catholic Communities at Stanford Choirs; video)

COMMUNION SONG #2 “Grace Alone” TFWS #2162

Every promise we can make
Every prayer and step of faith
Every difference we will make
Is only by his grace

Every mountain we will climb
Every ray of hope we shine
Every blessing left behind
Is only by his grace

Chorus

*Grace alone, which God supplies
Strength unknown he will provide
Christ in us, our Cornerstone
We will go forth in grace alone*

Every soul we long to reach
Every heart we hope to teach
Everywhere we share his peace
Is only by his grace

Every loving word we say
Every tear we wipe away
Every sorrow turned to praise
Is only by his grace

Chorus

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God, we give you thanks for the invitation to your Table. No matter who we are, no matter our struggles or regrets, we are never turned away. Like all the gifts you give us, may we never be content keeping them to ourselves. May this meal compel us to invite others – especially those who are turned away from the tables of their families, their churches, their communities – to our own tables, overflowing with love and nourishment abundant. Amen.

CLOSING SONG

“Guide My Feet”

GTG #741

Guide my feet, while I run this race
Guide my feet, while I run this race
Guide my feet, while I run this race
For I don't want to run this race in vain

Hold my hand...
Stand by me...
I'm your child...
Search my heart...

BENEDICTION

So now we leave this space of worship. And while so much of the road ahead is uncertain, the path constantly changing, we know some things that are as solid and sure as the ground beneath our feet and the sky above our heads.

We know God is love. We know Christ's light endures.

We know the Holy Spirit is there, found in the space between all things, closer to us than our next breath,
binding us to each other, until we meet again,

Go in peace.

POSTLUDE

Patricia Hammer
accompanist

Readings are NRSV unless otherwise noted. CEB=Common English Bible; CEV=Contemporary English Version; KJV=King James Version; MSG=The Message; NIV=New International Version; NLT=New Living Translation; TIB=The Inclusive Bible

1 Peter 2:2 – 10

2:2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation-

2:3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

2:4 Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and

2:5 like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

2:6 For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

2:7 To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,”

2:8 and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

2:10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

John 14:1 – 14

14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

14:2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

14:4 And you know the way to the place where I am going."

14:5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

14:7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

14:8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

14:9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

14:11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

14:12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.

14:13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14:14 If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

