

## GATHERING

### Prelude

### Welcome

### Call to Worship

One: Come and praise the Lord.

**All: Let us follow Jesus in love and service.**

One: We gather here to honor our Father, and the Son He sent to us.

**All: Let us follow Jesus in love and service.**

One: We come in joy and peace, full of thanksgiving.

**All: Let us follow Jesus in love and service.**

One: Come, let us worship together.

### Gathering Song: Trinity Song

Refrain 1: Holy Father, Son and Spirit, Holy Communion, Three in One

Refrain 2: Come, with Your peace, with Your invitation: bind us together in Holy Love.

Sandra McCracken\*\*

## PRAISING

### Prayer of Adoration

Dear Lord,

You are present, here and now, with us

In all Your wisdom, in all Your love.

We offer you our heartfelt love and devotion.

We know that You have created all,

That all that we have and enjoy comes from You;

Our bodies and the food with which we nourish ourselves,

Our minds and the wisdom you offer us,

Our hearts and the love with which they are filled.

For all this, we thank you.

Amen.

### Come, Holy Ghost



1. Come, Ho - ly Ghost, Cre - a - tor blest, and in our hearts take  
2. O Com - for - ter, to Thee we cry, Thou heav'n - ly gift of  
3. O Ho - ly Ghost, through Thee a - lone, know we the Fa - ther  
4. Praise we the Lord, Fa - ther and Son, and Ho - ly Spi - rit



up Thy rest; Come with Thy grace and heav'n - ly aid  
God most high; Thou fount of life, and fire of love,  
and the Son; be this our firm un - chang - ing creed,  
with them one; and may the Son on us be - stow



to fill our hearts which Thou hast made, to fill our hearts which  
and sweet a - noint - ing from a - bove, and sweet a - noint - ing  
that Thou dost from them both pro - ceed, that Thou dost from them  
all gifts that from the Spir - it flow, all gifts that from the

Refrain



Thou hast made. To V2 Benot a - fraid, where you go there I am with you. Benot a -  
from a - bove. To Refrain  
both pro - ceed. To V4  
Spi - rit flow. To Refrain



fraid, where you go there I am with you. Where you go there I am with you.

Veni Creator Spiritus, Rhabanus Maurus, 9th cent., tune & additional chorus by Bruce Benedict & Ray Mills 2005  
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**BELONGING**

**Kids on the Steps**

**Prayer of Confession**

God is the light of the world, like the sun shining above in the sky.  
It is our task to see His light, to receive it into our hearts and minds,  
And to reflect that light to others so that they may find their way in the darkness.  
Yet, we all know that we often fall short. But God receives us again and again.  
Trusting in God's faithfulness, let us come before God and one another in prayer.

God,  
Why do we so often fail to reflect your light and love to others?  
We become absorbed in our own selves and inattentive to others,  
So that our own desires become more important than the needs of those nearby.  
The festering wounds of our hearts consume us  
So that we turn our anger on others.  
Help us God, to shine brightly, reflecting Your light and love to all whom we meet.  
Amen.

**Song: Trisagion**



Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and might - y,



Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, have mer - cy, have mer - cy on us.

Fernando Ortega\*\*

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Friends, we know that in spite of our many failures, God still loves us,  
And as we turn our hearts and minds to Him, we know that He will always care.  
In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!  
One: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

**All: Thanks be to God!**

**FORMING**

**Sermon: Philippians 2:1-11, 14-16**

Tammi Allison

Good morning,

I'm humbled to be able to share my thoughts this morning. Many of you know that I'm an English and drama teacher by training. As a drama teacher a core principle is the "magic if." So, as the actor Danielle Radcliffe prepared to play Harry Potter, he would

immerse himself in the “IF” of being a young wizard. How would he act “if” he were really able to cast spells? How would he behave “if” he were faced with a three-headed dog? How would he speak “if” speaking to Voldemort? The word “if” is the heart of imagination. Interestingly, last week, Dan mentioned that discord is caused by a failure of imagination.

When I read and reread and immersed myself in various translations of Philippians 2: 1-11, I was looking through that lens. The power of “if”.

Most scholars believe that Paul was imprisoned in Rome as he wrote this letter to the Philippians. This is from The Message translation:

**2 1-4** If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you *care*—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

**5-8** Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human!* Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

**9-11** Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.

Please pray with me: Creating, redeeming, and sustaining God, you said, “when two or more are gathered in my name, I am there.” Be with us now as we reflect on how best to follow You.

At the beginning of Paul’s letter, he repeats the word “IF” five times. How can we not take note of that. “if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you...” I think of this community. There are so many examples of what being in this community has done for me: the satisfaction of working alongside sweet Giny Hyler during Family Promise and sheltering unhoused families in our church, the peace of having Jane Hogan and many other deacons show up on our doorstep with dinner when my husband Bruce was undergoing cancer treatment. The joy of working in the kitchen alongside Jane DeMarios, Cathy Johnson, Wally Congdon and leageans of other helpers as we prepared for a Presbyteri gathering. How many times have I been reduced to tears, joyful or sorrowful, by the sacred music created by all of our inspired musicians?

Really, I imagine that most of us answered in the affirmative to parts of the beginning of Paul’s letter. The way Paul writes it is a conditional if-then construct. If this, then that. Let’s look again at the “that”.

Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead.

I’m really struck by the phrase “be deep-spirited friends.”

Earlier in the summer when Dan was preaching, he asked us to shout out some of the signs of the political rancor in our world. Somebody said that we have lost the ability to have civil discourse; somebody else said that we always feel like we are walking in a minefield. This summer I have also been re-reading a number of dystopian texts: *A Handmaid’s Tale*, *1984*, and *Fahrenheit 451*. These dystopian societies have in common that people can’t trust each other. Really, they are trained to distrust each other. In these novels, one’s friends or family or children can report behavior not acceptable to the totalitarian government and then one goes to jail or just disappears. In the case of Orwell’s *1984*, Winston Smith is tortured in Room 101 with his worst fear: rats.

I certainly am not a fan of rats, and what I might suggest that is even worse than rats is an underlying suspicion of other people. However, in this age of identity politics and political rancor aren’t many of us suspicious of each other? Rather than doing as instructed by the Bible and being “deep-spirited friends” don’t we engage in what Brene Brown refers to as “common-enemy intimacy”?

Dr. Brene Brown is a researcher, professor and writer. She also attends an Episcopal church, much like ours: politically diverse where there is a space at the table for everyone. She writes that:

“Common-enemy intimacy is counterfeit connection and the opposite of true belonging. If the bond we share with others is simply that we hate the same people, the intimacy we experience is often intense, immediately gratifying, and an easy way to discharge outrage and pain. It is not, however, fuel for real connection. It’s fuel that runs hot, burns fast, and leaves a trail of polluted emotion.” For me what Brown teaches about counterfeit connections resonated. When I am deeply embroiled in political conversation, it is immediately gratifying. It is an easy way to discharge outrage and pain. When I am railing against the most recent callous statement by this politician or that pundit, I can form a quick “common enemy intimacy” with others. I love that Brown writes that it leaves a “trail of polluted emotion.” Alternatively, Paul calls the Philippians, and by extension us to be “deep-spirited” friends. This type of relationship seems to be the antithesis of the suspicion of dystopias or “common-enemy intimacy.” Dr. Hilton, in his book, *A House United*, reflects on this idea as well.

He writes that his book “exists to propose a fourth Christian mission: being one, as Jesus prayed.” Hilton continues to write that people will “know that God loves them here, not by our evangelism or our service or our advocacy, but by the way we love one another” (217-218). Loving one another toward the unity of deep-spirited friendship. It is easy to say, and so much harder to do. Our passage from Philippians certainly gives us direction. Paul advises, “Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself.” Paul reminds us that Jesus’ life was an “incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life.” We know that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. We don’t have the practice of foot washing in our society. I might suggest, though, that really taking the time to listen to another person is the 2024 equivalent of foot washing. So often we listen so that we can have our turn to speak or show off how clever we are or minimize another’s humanity.

Dan has at times asked us to reflect on who in our lives shows us Christ’s love. Would you indulge me and take a moment, close your eyes and think of a person in your life who listens to you the way that Christ washed His disciples’ feet? A person who listens to you as a deep-spirited friend. Not to fuel common-enemy intimacy, not to get ahead, but to listen in order to love us in a way that reminds us that “God loves us here.”

For me, that person is my late sister Cindy, who regardless of how busy she was would listen in a way that suggested that nothing else was quite as important as you. [While Cindy and I didn’t always agree on political issues, abortion for example; we loved each other as Paul encouraged. I had nothing but admiration for her serving as a foster mother for more than 20 infants and opening her home to women faced with crisis pregnancies. She appreciated that I served as a role model of female ferocity for her daughters.](#) In conversation, she possessed the Christ-like humility that affirmed that you were a person who had a treasure trove of amusing stories, profound pain, and important wisdom. Since her death, I often reflect that throughout her life, in her intimate, humble listening, she was washing the feet of her family, patients, and community.

Thinking back to the “magic if” of theatrical artists, the “if” that births imagination. What if we led with humility? What if we worked to show each other that we are beloved and forgiven? What if we truly acted like a person striving to emulate Jesus?

Perhaps as we live into this upcoming season, what if we strive for that Christ-like humility. Christ, who had equal status with God but chose to wash feet. In each moment, and in each conversation, we will be served to consider the writer James Baldwin’s words, “There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation. The challenge is in the moment; the time is always now.”

### **Song of Response: Give Thanks to God**

He sent His Son to die, and rise again to save us: His never-ending love is steadfast and sure.  
He’s broken our chains and given us freedom: Give thanks to God, for He is good!

In Him we are alive and have joy everlasting: His never-ending love is steadfast and sure.  
He casts out all fear and fills us with courage: Give thanks to God, for He is good!

Always good, always good to me.

When storms come and rage, His peace overwhelms us:  
His never-ending love is steadfast and sure.  
The Lord is our refuge when trouble surrounds us: Give thanks to God, for He is good!

He’s always pouring out His abundant provision: His never-ending love is steadfast and sure.  
For the depths of His riches and incredible wisdom: Give thanks to God, for He is good!

Always good, always good to me.  
Housefires\*\*

### **STEWARDSHIP**

#### **Invitation to Offering**

#### **Song: In Labor All Creation Groans**



In la - bor all cre - a - tion groans,  
In la - bor all cre - a - tion groans,  
In la - bor all cre - a - tion groans,  
In la - bor all cre - a - tion groans,

'til fear and ha - tred cease, 'til hu - man hearts come  
'til pre - ju - dice shall cease, 'til ev' - ry race and  
'til rape and mur - der cease, 'til wo - men walk by  
'til false d - vi - sions cease, 'til e - ne - mies are

to be - lieve in Christ a - lone is peace.  
tribe and tongue in Christ will live in peace.  
night un - harmed and Christ is this world's peace.  
re - con - ciled and Christ a - lone their peace.

Be our peace, be our peace, be our peace, Christ, our peace.

Sister Delores Hufner\*\*\*

**Prayers of the People**  
One: For all these, Lord,  
**All: Let us love and serve them.**

Let us join our hearts together in prayer, hearing “For all these, Lord,” and responding with “Let us love and serve them.”

God above,  
Our need is great but let us remember that we are not alone.  
In this world, there are billions, each much like ourselves.  
Many have needs as great, if not greater than ours.  
Help us to think of them and pray for their well-being.

For those who suffer want and need.  
(pause and pray in silence)  
For all these, Lord  
All: Let us love and serve them.

For those who suffer from illness and pain of the body.  
(pause and pray in silence)  
For all these, Lord  
All: Let us love and serve them.

For those who suffer from disease of the mind.  
(pause and pray in silence)  
For all these, Lord  
All: Let us love and serve them.

For those who suffer from wounds of the heart.  
(pause and pray in silence)  
For all these, Lord  
All: Let us love and serve them.

For those who have lost their way through life and live in darkness.  
(pause and pray in silence)  
For all these, Lord  
All: Let us love and serve them.

For those who suffer from a hate-filled heart.

(pause and pray in silence)  
For all these, Lord  
All: Let us love and serve them

Amen.

## **SENDING**

### **Ordination and Installation of Officers**

To be ordained/installed as a Deacon:  
Michele Chalmers

To be ordained/installed as Elders:  
Kim O'Connor and Ron Righter

### **Questions of Congregation**

Do we, the members of the church, accept these persons  
as ruling elders or deacons, chosen by God through the voice of this congregation  
to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ?  
If so, say: We do.

Do we agree to pray for them, to encourage them, to respect their decisions,  
and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?  
If so, say: We do.

### **Sending Song: We Will Feast in the House of Zion**

*Refrain: We will feast in the house of Zion. We will sing with our hearts restored.  
"He has done great things!" we will say together. We will feast and weep no more.*

We will not be burned by the fire, He is the Lord our God.  
We are not consumed by the flood. Upheld, protected, gathered up. *Refrain*

In the dark of night, before the dawn, my soul, be not afraid.  
For the promised morning, O how long? O God of Jacob, be my strength. *Refrain*

Every vow we've broken and betrayed, You are the faithful one.  
And from the garden to the grave, bind us together, bring shalom. *Refrain*  
Sandra McCracken\*\*

## **Benediction**

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Leading in Worship This Morning:  
Liturgy Led and Crafted by: Ron Righter  
Kids on the Steps: Melinda Hickey  
Sermon: Tammi Allison  
Musicians: Steven Lympus  
Slide, Sound and Video Techs: Zane Reneau and Dan McCaffery

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