



Order of worship

3rd Sunday of Easter

April 18, 2021

Call to worship *(Psalm 4)*

God has been gracious to us and heard our prayers.

God has put gladness in our hearts.

We shall live in peace;

for God alone is our dwelling place.

Call to confession

The resurrected Christ has come into our midst inviting us to repentance and forgiveness. Our journeys have taken us far from God, but the hospitality of Christ welcomes us home. Let us confess our sin.

Prayer of confession

Welcoming God, we confess that we have journeyed far from you. We have traveled far from your love and justice. We have neglected the stranger in our midst. And we have been doubted your presence with us. Help us to see the way you have set for us in Christ. Restore us to a life of mutuality, love and justice for all. Amen.

Assurance of pardon

The welcoming grace of God is sure for each and for all. Our dwelling place in God is secure. Receive the forgiveness of God and be restored to right relation with God and one another. Thanks be to God.



Prayer for illumination

God of the Word, open our hearts and minds, and give us the courage to hear your Word as we read the words of Scripture today. By the power of your Spirit, illuminate our paths. Amen.

Scripture readings

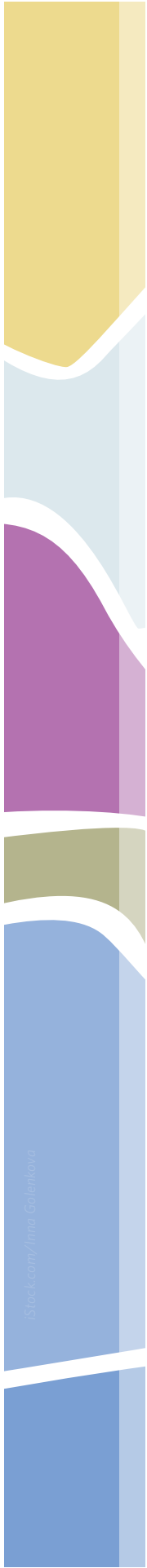
Sermon

Affirmation of faith *(from A Brief Statement of Faith)*

We trust in Jesus Christ,
Fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.

Call for the offering

God has given us the gift of our lives and the resources for living. Most important of all, God's grace sustains us in life, death and everywhere in between. Let us celebrate God's life-giving presence by bring our gifts in joyful response to the many gifts that we have been given.



Prayer of dedication

O God, giver of all good gifts, these gifts are a symbol of our lives dedicated to you and your ministry in our midst. May we be ministers of your peace, love and justice in our community and our world.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

God of grace, our journeys have taken many twists and turns. To be sure, we have not traveled on the same roads. Some of us have taken the main road, others have taken the back road and a lot of us have gotten stuck on the road. But our risen Lord has journeyed in our midst unbeknownst to us. He has journeyed in the stranger that we didn't recognize — the one who asked us many questions about our faith; questions that challenged us to grow deeper. Then as we got to know the stranger, we were awakened to the fact that they were the risen Christ in our midst and our eyes were opened. Help us, O God, to be ever attentive to welcoming the stranger who invites us along the road less traveled — the road of love, justice-seeking and peace.

Liberating God, in our post-Easter journeys we are reminded that you saw, knew and experienced the suffering of enslaved Hebrews in Egypt and you summoned Moses to liberate your people. We are also reminded of Isaiah's poetry about the servant who suffered unjustly, but whose suffering awakened the pursuit of justice. Through these stories we see the crucified and risen Christ who enters into our enslavements of the world in order to bring liberation and awaken people to the way of justice.

God of resurrection, in our post-Easter journeys we have encountered Christ when we have extended and received hospitality amid the crises of the pandemic, the racial reckoning and ongoing economic disparity. We've also encountered Christ when white privilege has been challenged and new ways of being your community have emerged. Empower us to become your beloved community and enable us to welcome the stranger to the table so that we can break bread together. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying, *Our Father...*



Charge and benediction (*Colossians 3:12-14*)

As God's own, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness and patience, forgiving one another as the Lord has forgiven you, and crown all these things with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Amen.

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Liturgy written by Roger Gench and provided for free distribution.

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