



## Order of worship

4th Sunday of Easter

**April 25, 2021**

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### **Call to worship** *(Psalm 23)*

The Lord is our shepherd, we shall not want.

**God leads us into green pastures and beside still waters;**

God restores our soul and leads us in right paths.

**Even though we walk through the difficult valley, we fear no evil; for you are with us; your rod and your staff — they comfort us.**

You prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies; you anoint our head with oil; our cup overflows.

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord our whole life long.**

### **Call to confession**

God is the Good Shepherd and knows our needs. God leads us into green pastures and beside still waters, and sustains us when we are in trouble. But, consumed by our own interests, we don't see God's presence, nor do we attend to our neighbor in need. Our God is merciful, eager to forgive, if only we would repent and confess our sin. Confident in God's mercy, let us offer the good confession before God and one another.

### **Prayer of confession**

O God, you are the Good Shepherd who attend to our needs, but we fail to see your abundant life in our midst. We see only scarcity. Our consumer culture has engraved upon us the message that we are "not enough" — not beautiful or handsome enough, not smart enough, not rich enough. At the core of our being, we believe that we are "not enough." Help us to see that we are your beloved children, created in your image. And help us to live out of your goodness. Amen.



### **Assurance of pardon**

The psalmist tells us that God's goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives. Friends, believe this good news. Believe that God's mercy is sure, and that God's goodness will fill our lives and empower us to love God and neighbor as ourselves.

### **Prayer for illumination**

Almighty God, open our eyes, our hearts and our minds to hear, see and know your Word as we read the words of Scripture. Empower us with the wisdom to hear, see and know what the Spirit is saying to the church. Amen.

### **Scripture readings**

### **Sermon**

### **Affirmation of faith** *(from a Brief Statement of Faith)*

In life and in death we belong to God.  
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,  
whom alone we worship and serve.

With believers in every time and place,  
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death  
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **Call for the offering**

God has given to us freely of the goodness of God's creation. We now return a portion of these goods in the hope and promise that these resources will service God's commonwealth in our church, community and world.



## Prayer of dedication

Creator, Liberator and Redeemer God, we pray for the wisdom to be good stewards the gifts you have given to us. Take these gifts, we pray, bless and use them to benefit others and to empower our work for justice in the church and in the world. Amen.

## Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

God of the Easter season, you come to us with resurrection life to liberate us from all that enslaves us in patterns of racialized and economic violence, and from all that keeps us from the fullness of life you desire for all of your children and for the earth itself. Help us to see that you are the Good Shepherd whose goodness and mercy follow us all of our days. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for your church throughout the globe amid this pandemic. Empower us to serve you faithfully, and be the place where wounds are touched, attended to, released, liberated and redeemed. And we pray for countries who have not yet received an equitable supply of the COVID-19 vaccine. Give us, your church, a spirit of justice so that we can witness to officials who are responsible for just distribution of this needed vaccine so that equitable sharing will be the norm and not an afterthought. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people in every nation throughout the earth. May we seek your common life and work for justice and peace for all your people and not just the few. Enable us to be in solidarity with those whose rights have been abused or rejected, so that we may be a witness to justice. And we pray for those whose lives have been traumatized by gun violence — may we be agents of nonviolence in places of deep brokenness. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Empower us to live according to your Great Commandment — to love you with our whole being, and to love others as ourselves. Help us to trust that your future is struggling toward realization even now in our midst. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying, *Our Father...*



### **Charge and benediction**

Go forth into the world in peace,  
knowing that God's goodness and mercy follow us.  
Lift up the broken-hearted.  
Stand with the oppressed.  
And let us do everything out of the love of God,  
which we know in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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Liturgy written by Roger Gench  
and provided for free distribution.

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