

Order of Worship

Third Sunday of Easter
April 23, 2023

Call to worship

We have been walking, Lord,
**on roads of uncertainty and fear,
on roads of exhaustion and doubt,
on winding roads that have led us here.**
Join us on our journey, Lord.
**By your presence, refresh our spirits,
set our hearts ablaze,
and give us new direction!**

Call to confession

When we say, “we don’t sin,” we deny who we are. But when we say, “there’s no way out,” we deny who God is. Trusting that God’s grace is more powerful than our sin, let us confess our sins together.

Prayer of confession

Jesus, Teacher, we confess today
our outright foolishness.
We have been foolish to doubt your promises.
Foolish to withhold love from neighbor.
Foolish to chase riches, prestige and power.
Foolish to waste your gifts and spoil your creation.
Foolish to divide your children from each other.
Foolish to think hope is lost.
Wise us up again.
Open our hearts to your presence
in our lives, in our neighbors, in our world.
In your grace, help us grab onto
our millionth second chance,
and forge a new road from here on.
Amen.

Assurance of pardon

Hear the good news! New life is not only possible; it has drawn near to us in Jesus. The promise is for us, and for all the children of God.
By the grace of God, the glory of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are forgiven and we are free! Alleluia! Amen.



Prayer for illumination

Holy Spirit, send your fire to dance across these familiar words, illuminating ancient stories, illuminating weary hearts. Set us ablaze again with the promises of the Holy Word, still proclaimed for us. Amen.

Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith (Adapted from the Brief Statement of Faith)

In life and 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.

We trust in God, whom Jesus called Abba, Father.

In sovereign love, God created the world good, acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation, and makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God.

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God, was crucified, and raised from the dead, delivering us from death to life eternal.

We trust in God the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life.

The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith, sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor, and binds us together with all believers in the one body of Christ, the church.

**In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, Come, Lord Jesus!**

Call for the offering

What shall we return to the Lord? Nothing can equal what God has given us. Let us therefore give our money, our time and our energy with the generous joy of children, presenting gifts to make God smile.

Prayer of dedication

God of surprises, take these gifts and astound us by what they do. Through the work of your church, restore a broken world into the beloved community you dream of for us. Show us how to take these offerings and use them "to love each other deeply from the heart." In your grace we trust. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

Holy God,
we pray in ever-widening circles,
extending the love we feel for those closest to us



out into our communities, our nation and our whole world.

Through our prayers, stretch us
to make a place in our hearts
for those we do not know
but who are known by you.

We pray for those we know best –
friends, families, neighbors, coworkers –
all whose joys and troubles affect us daily.

[Intercessory prayers may be lifted]

We pray for those we see but do not know:
those who cross our paths
on the road or the grocery store or the restaurant,
those who are our neighbors here in [town, city, community]
but whose inner lives remain a mystery to us.
We ask that your spirit dwell in our community,
turning strangers into neighbors,
giving people purpose and compassion.
Help us to see past polite fictions
to those who are hungry, scared or lonely,
and in seeing them, love them.

We pray for those we see only in the media,
siblings around the world
whose stories get sold to us as the news of the day.
Help us to see humanity behind the pixels and soundbites.
We pray especially for those caught in cycles of violence and war,
oppression and economic scarcity,
persecution because of their religion, ethnicity or gender —
all those who do not know what it is to be valued and cherished.
Help us to feel the ties that bind all your children together
to love as radically as you do.

We pray for those we do not see,
the millions whose stories go untold,
whose lives feel so far removed from our own.
We pray for your people in every place
and ask that you keep remind us
that no one is beyond your reach.
Keep us ever hungry to know your people,
not as curiosities
but as siblings in Christ.

Expand our hearts, God,
until we can hold your people inside them —
all your people, all over the world,
following the example of our Lord Jesus,
who taught us to pray, saying, **“Our Father....”**



Charge and benediction

Are your hearts burning?
Have you met the risen Christ?
If so, go out with great joy
to share the good news.

And if not, if your heart is still weary
and full of doubt, do not despair:
because Christ might find you at any time.
Go back to the road, and walk;
keep your heart open, and God may just surprise you yet.

And as you go, in joy or in doubt,
know that the grace of God will uphold you,
the peace of Christ will enfold you,
and the Holy Spirit will make you bold,
today, tomorrow and forever.

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Liturgy written by Carol Holbrook Prickett and provided for free distribution.

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