



**Love
One
Another**

MAY 17, 2020

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SUNBURY, PA.
SERVING CHRIST AND COMMUNITY SINCE 1785**

WORSHIP OF ALMIGHTY GOD and CELEBRATION OF LIFE TOGETHER IN CHRIST

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Liturgical Color: White

A video of this service—led by Pastors Lisa and Ryan Kraus—is available on YouTube. You can find the link through the Facebook page of the First Presbyterian Church of Sunbury. This liturgy has been adapted from a liturgy written by Jill Duffield, of Presbyterian Outlook. Where words are italicized, Pastor Lisa has used her own words. Find a quiet space and use this for a time of personal or family worship. God’s Spirit will join us together even while we’re separated.

CALL TO WORSHIP (from Psalm 66:16-20)

Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what God has done for me. I cried aloud to the Lord, and God was extolled with my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; God has given heed to the words of my prayer. Blessed be God, because the Lord has not rejected my prayer or removed God’s steadfast love from me.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for the gift of this day. We dedicate this time to your worship and to your glory. We pray your Holy Spirit would gather our spirits together, strengthen our ties to one another, and strengthen our faith in our Communion with you and with one another. Accept our offerings of praise and worship. We pray that through our offerings you would be glorified and, by your Spirit, we would be edified. Through Christ’s holy name we pray. Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION

The Holy Spirit, the Advocate, gives us the words we need to speak. Jesus Christ himself prays for us. We need not fear sharing our failings with the One who abides with us and in us. With the confidence of the children of God, let us confess our sin to God and before one another.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

Lord, you tell us that if we love you, we will keep your commandments. You tell us that your new commandment is to love one another as you have loved us. We cannot possibly live up to this standard. We frequently neglect your teachings. We easily see others’ faults and too often make excuses for our own. Send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to help us follow your instructions to feed the hungry, tend to the hurting and love our enemies. In your mercy forgive us yet again and free us to love God and neighbor more fully. (Silent prayer *of reflection and confession*) Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God is not far from us. God is closer than our own breath. We are not alone, not left to save ourselves. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. When we confess our sin and repent, the heavens rejoice and we can trust we are forgiven. *Alleluia! Amen!*

PASSING OF PEACE

Take a moment to pray a blessing of Christ's peace on each of your friends and family members. Maybe imagine yourself in the sanctuary. Walk around to where each friend sits, shake their hand, give a wave. As you imagine each friend, pray Christ's peace upon them. The touch may not be real, but the blessing very much is. May Christ's peace, which surpasses all understanding, be with you all.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Almighty God, we know that we are not to be a people of fear, and yet there is much of which we are afraid in these challenging times. We come to you now, asking for the gift of your living Word. Enlighten the eyes of our heart so that we can be the people of love you call us to be. *In Jesus' name, Amen.*

FIRST READING John 14:15-21

SECOND READING Acts 17:22-34

TIME OF REFLECTION

Take time for your own reflections on the passages. What jumped out at you? What is one phrase you want to hold onto? Where do you hear Good News in these passages? If you're looking for more thoughts, I've included a brief meditation as an insert.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (from *A Brief Statement of Faith*)

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. The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the church. In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace. 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!"

JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE CONGREGATION

Sometimes our prayer concerns can feel overwhelming. It's in these moments we lean all the more heavily upon the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Comforter. Romans 8:26-27 assures us: "the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." Take time to sit quietly in the presence of God. Lay out before the Lord all of your own concerns and worries, the ones you can name and the ones for which you have no words. Our Father in Heaven hears our cries.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Helper, Holy Spirit, Advocate, Comforter, come to us now as we seek the wisdom and will of our God. We want to love as Jesus commands, loving others no less than he loves us, and yet we struggle with pettiness and partisanship, with greed and selfishness. Our fears prevent us from practicing the perfect love that sets us free to live with joy. For just a moment, Helper, Holy Spirit, Advocate and Comforter, come to us and quiet our minds, calm our hearts, envelop us with the peace of Christ.

Abiding in the God who abides in us, we remember Jesus' teachings to serve and tend, feed and visit, clothe and welcome. We remember those who feel forgotten. We embrace those who know rejection. We treat with tenderness those who have been abused. We seek out those who are lost. We stand with the vulnerable and speak up to those who oppress the weak. We will not abandon those who mourn but will remain with the brokenhearted until resurrection resounds through all creation.

Helper, Holy Spirit, Advocate and Comforter, come to us now to show us how to follow Christ more closely. As the world reels from this pandemic and our anxieties increase, give us the courage to speak the truth to power, the wisdom to tell the truth in love, the faith to live the truth that sets us all free. May our presence provide the light of Christ that will show us the way.

Resting in the promise that we will not be left alone, we dare to risk our own safety and security for the sake of others. In this season when so many are suffering, we will not forget that whenever we care for the least of these among us, we care for Christ himself. Grant us the energy to remain steadfast in our caring, the hope to bear witness to the compassion of Christ in painful places and the inspiration to see divine possibility where others only see intractable problems.

(a time for silent prayer)

Helper, Holy Spirit, Advocate and Comforter, come to us now to ease our burdens, refresh our souls and make our joy complete. Helper, Holy Spirit, Advocate and Comforter come to us now to assure us that we are not alone, not now, not ever. We pray in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, the One who taught us to say when we pray, Our Father...

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

God you have kept us among the living and not let our feet slip. You listen to us and abide with us. You sent your Son to save us, gave us the Advocate to guide us and promise to never leave us alone. Your goodness astounds us. We will extol you and sing your praises. We will offer in thanks a portion of the resources you have entrusted to us.

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Take this time to pray over the monetary offering you will mail to the church or set aside for when we're all back together. The needs of the church continue even as we remain apart, if you are able please mail in your monetary offering. Remember that our offerings go beyond the monetary. Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you toward additional ways you can share your gifts in service of God's Kingdom. . . .

OFFERTORY RESPONSE Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Lord, in you we live and move and have our being. You pour out your blessings upon us and we rest in your steadfast kindness. We cannot possibly return to you that which you deserve. We can only humbly present you with these gifts in gratitude and joy. Use our offerings, we pray, to show the love of Jesus Christ to a hurting world. May they be a source of hope and comfort to all those who need to know they are not alone. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHARGE AND BLESSING (Romans 8:38-39)

In your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. May the God of peace sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and will do this. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.