

Order of Worship

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 17, 2023

Gathering and Welcome

Prelude *Precious Lord, Take My Hand* – arr. Mark Hayes
Jessye Whitis, pianist

Call to worship (from Psalm 103:1-4)

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me.

Bless God's holy name.

God forgives. God heals. Gods transforms with steadfast love.

Bless God's holy name.

*Opening Hymn # *All Creatures of Our Lord and King*

*Call to confession

Before we can hear God's truth spoken in love, we must free ourselves from all that obstructs us from honestly acknowledging our wrongdoing. Let us examine our hearts and confess our sins to God.

*Prayer of confession

Nurturing God, like a hen gathers her brood under her wings, you desire to gather your children. But division and disagreement plague us. We cling to rigid certainties, approach each other in arrogance, and fail to listen. We walk away from conflict, rather than working through it. Forgive us, Holy God. Help us grow in faith, mature in relationship, and be transformed through your steadfast love. Amen.

*Assurance of pardon (James 5: 15-16)

The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, redeemed and restored to God's path of righteousness. Amen.

Choral Anthem *On Eagle's Wings* – arr. Mark Hayes

Prayer for illumination

Open us, Eternal God, to your Word read and proclaimed.
Help us not to turn from your truth or avoid your message.
Help us be receptive to the wisdom you offer. Amen.

Scripture readings Romans 14: 1 – 12; Matthew 18: 21 - 35

Sermon *Teach Me To Forgive*

Rev. Kathy Vineyard, H.R.

***Affirmation of faith** (from Book of Common Worship)

**We believe there is no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus;
for we know that all things work together for good
for those who love God,
who are called according to God's purpose.
We are convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor rulers,
nor things present, nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

Hymn of Response # 515 *I Come with Joy

Call for the offering

We are inspired to be generous by a generous God.
We are inspired to give by the greatest of givers. In
gratitude to God, let us present our tithes and
offerings.

Offertory *I Ned Thee Every Hour* – arr. Joel Raney

Jessye Whitis, pianist

Doxology # 606 *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

***Prayer of dedication**

Holy God, bless these gifts for your good use. May
these tokens of our gratitude be of service in blessing
the poor, feeding the hungry, clothing and sheltering
those struggling to survive. Use these gifts to further
Christ's mission and ministry in a hurting world. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

Loving God, as summer rapidly rolls into fall and busy schedules give us little space to pause and contemplate the eternal, we quiet ourselves now to enter your presence, to open our minds and hearts, to breathe the air you provide, to feel our hearts' beat, to give thanks, and to lift our prayerful petitions.

You bless us, God, with your steadfast love, surrounding us during times of suffering, comforting us in sorrow, offering us hope to face whatever is ahead. There is so much devastation, so much pain — we cannot wrap our minds around it all. Yet we petition you, Great God of All, to be with your people struggling to recover from natural disasters, to strengthen your people oppressed by worldly powers and greedy regimes, to soften hearts hell bent on war and violence, to heal those who are wounded, sick and grieving.

Faithful God, we trust you will never abandon us. We trust in your promise to provide for us, our children and your creation. We know joy because of you. We are blessed with friends and family and neighbors by your call to beloved community. Even amid suffering, you grace us with joyful opportunities to laugh, play, sing and dance. Help us, Holy God, to not be so focused on all that is going wrong that we miss all that is going right.

Finally, ground us in your good news, O God, and help us hold on to your promise of redemption in Jesus our Christ. Keep our feet steady on Christ's path, help us follow his teachings, help us love as he loved. Now, hear us as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us, saying: "**Our Father...**".

Charge and benediction

God does not abandon us. God's love is steadfast.
May this love inspire all our relationships
as we leave this house of worship,
knit together in God's love,
bound as a community of Christ,
guided by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Postlude