



Order of Worship

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 18, 2025

Gathering and Welcome *There is a Redeemer*

Prelude *Great is the Lord* – Michael W. Smith Jessye Whitis, pianist

Call to worship (based on Psalm 148)

Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.

**He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds,
Which cannot be passed.**

***Hymn # 366** *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

Call to confession

The world often judges by outward appearances, but Jesus reveals to us a deeper reality. When we fail to live in the new way of love he commands, we distance ourselves from the truth and pretend to possess a righteousness that is only ours through Christ.

In this new promise, and knowing God's steadfast love is trustworthy and true, let us confess our shortcomings together, seeking the Spirit's new workings within us.

Prayer of confession

Loving God, you call us to your merciful, gracious love, freely given without expectation or strings attached, like the unconditional love of a bridegroom. While we are eager to experience your mercy and grace in our own lives, we are quick to make our extension of your mercy and grace conditional for others, holding court in our own hearts.

We would rather show mercy to those we judge worthy, forgetting the new commandment to love as you have loved us. We would rather extend grace to those who will show us grace in return, missing the trustworthy and true nature of your boundless forgiveness. Forgive us, Redeeming God. And transform our hearts with your amazing grace and unconditional love so that our relationships and your world are transformed.

Assurance of pardon

Behold: The former things have passed away, and God's grace flows like a river of new life. Friends, hear the good news: through the grace of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven! You are made anew!

Choral Anthem *I Will Sing Praise Unto the Lord* – by Joseph M. Martin
Jessye Whitis, director

Prayer for illumination

Gracious and Loving God, as you once declared, "See, I am making all things new." So now, through your Holy Spirit, open our hearts and minds to your transforming word in Scripture. Grant us a new vision of the height, depth, and breadth of your trustworthy and true love, that we may be inspired to live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, reflecting the new creation you have begun in us. Amen.

Scripture readings Acts 11: 1-18; John 13: 31-35

Sermon *After the Earthquake*

Rev. Kathy Vineyard, H.R.

Affirmation of faith (from Confession of 1967, Inclusive Language)

The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. His human life involves the church in the common life of all people. His service to men and women commits the church to work for every form of human well-being. His suffering makes the church sensitive to all human suffering so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of persons in every kind of need. His crucifixion discloses to the church God's judgment on the inhumanity that marks human relations, and the awful consequences of the church's own complicity in injustice.

In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming, the church sees the promise of God's renewal of human life in society and of God's victory over all wrong.

The church follows this pattern in the form of its life and in the method of its action. So, to live and serve is to confess Christ as Lord.

Hymn # 215 *What Wondrous Love Is This

Call for the offering

Just as God pours out new blessings without measure, let us, with hearts overflowing with gratitude for this divine generosity in our lives, offer ourselves and our resources for the ongoing ministry of Jesus Christ in this new creation being ushered in.

Offertory *Sweet Hour of Prayer* – arr. Howard Helvey

Jessye Whitis, pianist

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

Prayer of dedication

Generous God, receive these gifts that we place before your throne. Do more with them than we can ask or imagine, furthering the holy work of your new kingdom in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who revealed to us the truth of your loving commands.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

O Holy One, you spoke your creative Word in the beginning, and through the ages, your voice continues to guide and shape us. You called the first disciples, and in their struggles to discern your will, you revealed your ongoing purpose. Even now, you invite us to seek your wisdom and live in your abundant life. May your Word for us be like a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

And your Word, like a well-tended tree beside flowing waters, also nourishes and sustains us. When anxieties and worries cloud our vision, when uncertainty fills our days, remind us of the blessedness of delighting in your law, meditating on it day and night. Grant us the steadfastness to bear fruit in your due season.

Knowing your love is true and trustworthy, and that your covenant endures, we pray for the church around the world.

Just as the early followers sought your guidance in choosing Matthias, grant us discernment in our leadership and faithfulness in our witness. For those whose witness demands great courage, for those who tirelessly labor for justice and peace, and for our beloved denomination, strengthen them all by your Spirit.

For the church universal, that we may embody the unity for which Jesus prayed, a unity rooted in the knowledge that we have eternal life through believing in your Son. May our love for one another be a testament to the truth of your presence in and through our connections.

And be with our congregation, O God. Continue to knit our lives together in ways that are beautiful, faithful, profound and holy. May we all say and do as disciples of Jesus Christ, who alone is the head of the church, offering prayers of praise and thanksgiving for your steadfast love. Strengthen our fellowship, that we may be co-workers in your new kingdom. And blend our voices now with the saints who have gone before us and with disciples throughout the world as we pray as Jesus taught us: **“Our Father...”**

Hymn of Sending # 300 *We Are One in the Spirit

Charge and benediction

Friends, go forth in the new peace of Christ, empowered by the trustworthy and true Spirit. Live as witnesses to God’s new creation, offering the living water of hope to all you meet. And may you go with the blessing of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. **Amen.**

Postlude *Christ Arose*

Jessye Whitis, pianist

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Liturgy written by Brian Christopher Coulter.