



Order of service

4th Sunday of Easter

May 3, 2020

Call to worship *(Psalm 23)*

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff — they comfort me.

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

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Call to confession

Jesus knows our name, calls us and offers us abundant life. God's goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life. Trusting in these sure promises, we boldly confess our sin to God and with one another.

Prayer of confession

Lord, you are our Shepherd. You seek us when we are lost and guide us in life-giving ways. Yet, we turn from you and heed the voices of thieves and bandits. You know us by name, but we refuse to hear your call and instead go our own way. Forgive us for failing to follow you. Quiet the noise around and within us so that we might better recognize your word and do your will. Come close, calm our fears, go ahead of us, so that we might see you clearly, enter by the gate and be saved. Amen.

Assurance of pardon

Even though we walk through the darkest valley, we need not fear evil. God is with us. God's rod and staff comforts us. God forgives and transforms us. Friends, believe the good news, through Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.



Prayer for illumination

Lord, we want to hear your voice. We want to know your ways. We seek now to listen for your Word and we pray for the courage to act upon what the Spirit is saying to your church.

Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith *(from A Declaration of Faith)*

Jesus was dead and buried, but God raised him from the dead. The risen Lord appeared to his followers. They recognized him as their Master who had been crucified. Before Jesus left them, he commissioned them to proclaim to all people the good news of his victory over death, and promised to be with them always.

We are certain that Jesus lives. He lives as God with us, touching all of human life with the presence of God. He lives as one of us with God. Because he shares our humanity and has bound us to himself in love, we have an advocate in the innermost life of God. We declare that Jesus is Lord. His resurrection is a decisive victory over the powers that deform and destroy human life. His lordship is hidden. The world appears to be dominated by people and systems that do not acknowledge his rule. But his lordship is real. It demands our loyalty and sets us free from the fear of all lesser lords who threaten us. We maintain that ultimate sovereignty now belongs to Jesus Christ in every sphere of life. Jesus is Lord. He has been Lord from the beginning. He will be Lord at the end. Even now he is Lord.

Call for the offering

Jesus himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

How then will we respond to such a gift? We respond with gratitude and by giving joyfully a portion of what God has entrusted to us. Let us worship God with God's tithes and our offerings.

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Prayer of dedication

God of goodness and mercy, you walk with us through the darkest valleys, provide for us in the direst of circumstances, lead us beside still waters and restore our souls. In joy and gratitude, we offer you these gifts. Bless them and use them, we pray, to show others the gate of salvation and the abundant life made possible through your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

Almighty God, when we consider what you have done for us, we are filled with awe and wonder. You sent your Son to save us. You set the table for us and Jesus himself serves us. You do not leave us in the dark but send the light of Christ to guide us in the ways of grace and truth. You give us your living Word, a compassionate community, the bread of heaven and the prayers of the faithful. We lack nothing and therefore we will fear no evil.

We ask, Good Shepherd, for your rod and staff to guide and comfort us. While we lament our inability to be together in churches, we rejoice in the ability to praise you no matter where we are gathered. Knowing that you give us the gift of prayer and the responsibility to care for each other, we lift up to you now those who feel as if they have been in the valley of darkness for far too long. Bring comfort to the brokenhearted and relief to the oppressed. Grant peace to those afflicted with anxiety and heal the sick. Strengthen all of those doing essential work, protect them and ease their fears and those of the ones who love them. Give wisdom and discernment to people in positions of power. Help us all to look to the interest of others so that all may have the abundant life Christ came to give.

Lord, you call us by name and show us where to go and how to serve. You are the gate through which our comings and goings gain purpose and participate in your present and coming kingdom. Help us better to hear your voice so that we would not submit to lesser gods or vain pursuits. As we wrestle with the stress of this season, the uncertainty and the suffering of this pandemic, lead us in the ways of righteousness, make us brave in our kindness, tireless in our work for justice, humble in our walk with you. Do not let us grow weary of doing good.

As we come together, across time and space, with the whole communion of the saints, we seek to reflect your love, sharing with one another, supporting the weak, tending to the vulnerable, breaking bread with all people, knowing we are reconciled and saved through the grace of our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who taught us to say when we pray, *Our Father ...*



Charge and benediction *(from The Book of Common Worship)*

Go out into the world in peace. Have courage! Hold fast to what is good. Return no one evil for evil. Strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the suffering. Honor all people. Love and serve the Lord your God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and remain with you always.

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Liturgy written by Jill Duffield
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