



Order of worship

15th Sunday after Pentecost

September 13, 2020

Call to worship (*Psalm 103:1-5*)

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless God's holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all God's benefits —

who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Call to confession (*Psalm 103:8-10*)

The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The Lord will not always accuse,
nor will God be angered forever.

God does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

Trusting this promise, we boldly confess our sin
to God and before one another.



Prayer of confession

Lord Christ, you declare: Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. You instruct us to forgive seventy-seven times, to remember God's grace toward us and extend it to one another. Despite your clear word to refrain from judging others, we pronounce others guilty and unworthy of our compassion. We quarrel over opinions and sow division when you call us to cultivate relationships and demonstrate our unity in Christ. Instead of responding to your grace with gratitude, we attempt to limit the love you command us to share. Forgive our hard-heartedness. Expand our circles of concern. Enliven our communities with your boundary-breaking, reconciling Spirit. Amen.

Assurance of pardon (*Psalm 103:11-13*)

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is the Lord's steadfast love toward those who fear God; as far as the east is from the west, so far the Lord removes our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion for his children, so the God has compassion for those who fear the Lord.

Friends, believe the good news, through Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

Prayer for illumination

Lord, we come to this time overwhelmed with distractions, consumed with busyness, occupied by worries and unsure of what to do next. And yet, we are here, yearning for a word from you, wanting a sense of your presence, seeking your wisdom for this time and place. Send your Spirit to focus our attention and hone our hearing in order that we might hear what you are saying to your church. Amen.

Scripture readings

Sermon



Affirmation of faith (from *The Confession of Belhar*)

We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family. We believe that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another; that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain; that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted; that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity.

Call for the offering (*Romans 14:7-8*)

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Knowing this truth we hold nothing back from the God to whom we belong, offering with thanksgiving a portion of what God has entrusted us to steward.



Prayer of dedication

Generous God, we worry that we cannot possibly give you what you deserve, that despite our desire to be faithful, we will fail and fall short. In your grace, you remind us that we need not, that we cannot, repay you for your mercy and goodness toward us, but that you accept and use whatever we offer in gratitude. Bless these gifts given as a symbol of our loyalty and love for you. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

Almighty God, you alone are Lord of conscience. In life and death, we belong to you. Ultimately, we are accountable only to you. Trusting in your mercy, confident as your children, we come to you eager to be in your presence and receive your wisdom. When uncertainty swirls all around us, we rest in your peace. When the world feels threatening, we find solace in your compassion. When we are overwhelmed by the needs of the world, we remember your power to heal and bring wholeness in ways we could never imagine. When we fear we are alone, you promise never to abandon us. When we yearn to unburden our hearts, you assure us that you hear our sighs too deep for words.

Merciful God, there is much on our minds this day: people still recovering from hurricanes and fires, communities reeling from racial injustice, families grieving the death of loved ones, students, parents and teachers attempting to navigate a school year like no other. In all these places and with all your people, bring relief and offer encouragement. We suffer with those suffering from hunger, illness and loneliness. We rejoice with those who rejoice at the birth of a baby or the beginning of a marriage. We give thanks for the care we receive from friends and the kindness shown to us by strangers. Make of us, we pray, reflections of your goodness and grace to those most in need of your mercy.

Loving God, we seek only to be faithful in this season, as in all seasons. Do not let us forget that you equip us to do your will. You surround us with others with whom to do the work you call us to do. You send your Spirit to give us the words, show us the way and empower us to keep going when we are tempted to turn away from you. We hold fast to your promises in order that others might come to experience your love through us.

continued on the next page



Gracious God, we are bold to pray for those closest to us and even for ourselves. As we wrestle with “what if?” and “what now?” we ask for a sure sense of your providence even when we cannot yet perceive it. Grant us the wisdom to know the next thing we must do in order to follow you. Give us the courage to do that next thing with our whole heart and the faith to do it with joy. We make our prayer in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who taught us to say when we pray, *Our Father...*

Charge (*Colossians 3:12-14*)

As God’s own, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness and patience, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, and crown all these things with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Benediction (*Romans 15:13*)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

© *Presbyterian Outlook*, 2020.

Liturgy written by Jill Duffield and provided for free distribution.

For more resources, visit pres-outlook.org.