

Order of Worship

Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 17, 2024

Call to worship (from Psalm 51)

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love;

According to your abundant mercy, blot out our transgressions.

You desire truth in our deepest selves, so teach our hearts wisdom.

Let us hear your joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

Create in us clean hearts, O God; put new and right spirits within us.

Sustain in us willing spirits and restore us to the joy of your salvation. Let us worship God!

Call to confession (Jeremiah 31:33)

"The days are surely coming," says the Lord, "When I will make a new covenant with my people. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."

Friends, we are God's people. Yet even as we strive to know our God and walk in God's paths, we fall short. Trusting in God as a merciful covenant partner, let us confess our sin together:

Prayer of confession

Living Christ, with whom we journey to the cross, we confess that we are always looking for an easier way. We long for the fullness of life with you, but we are slow to abandon the comforts of the life we know. We seek the fruit of new life, but we are not willing to die to ourselves. You call us to life in community, but we stubbornly cling to "me and mine." Yet you offer the grace of life abundant, even and especially when our best efforts fall short. Transform us, renew us, and free us from our attachment to what was, so that you might bring us into the glory of what will be. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Assurance of pardon

Friends, hear the good news! We worship a God who forgives our iniquities and remembers our sins no more. Proclaim the good news with me:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayer for illumination

God of living water, pour out your Spirit and nourish your Word within us, that in its time, that Word may bear much fruit. Amen.

Scripture readings

Sermon

Affirmation of faith (Heidelberg Catechism, Q.1)

What is your only comfort in life and in death?

That we are not our own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. Because we belong to him, Christ, by the Holy Spirit, assures us of eternal life and makes us wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for God.

Call for the offering

By the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, our lives have borne much fruit. Let us now return thanks where it is due and offer the fruits of our labor back to the Lord. Let us receive the morning offering.

Prayer of dedication

Gracious God, it is our joy to return the gifts of our lives to you. May our offering this morning forever bring glory to your name, and may we continue to work tirelessly for the well-being of your whole creation. Amen.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

Let us come before the God who holds our life and even our death and pray for the transformation that Jesus Christ has shown us is possible.

God of the cross, the grave and the empty tomb, we lift up to you all within us that is in the messy process of death and resurrection. Transform us, we pray, into the likeness of your Son, that you might use us to bear much fruit in the world:

May we die to environmental extraction and live to responsible stewardship.

May we die to Christian triumphalism and live to interfaith humility.

May we die to stagnation and aversion to change and live to the new things God is always doing among us.

May we die to American exceptionalism and live to global citizenship.

May we die to isolation and NIMBY ('Not-in-my-Backyard')-ism and live to our shared humanity.



May we die to division and partisanship and live to reconciliation and compassion.

May we die to addictions and consumerism and live to our shared well-being.

May we die to me and mine and live to us and ours.

God who is always bringing new life out of death and despair, we pray for all those who need your healing hand this morning — for the hungry and homeless, those sick and in prison, people living in fear, loneliness or grief. Answer the longing of your people with the gift of your presence.

All this we pray in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying, “**Our Father...**”

Charge and benediction

People of God, go forth on your Lenten journey, knowing that you do not go alone. Have courage as you walk toward the cross, even through the valley of the shadow of death, for the Word of Life has been planted within you, and God has promised that it will bear much fruit.

And as you go, may God’s glory inspire you, Christ’s cross challenge you, and the Spirit’s creativity pursue you, now and forevermore. Amen.

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Liturgy written by Ginna Bairby and provided for free distribution.

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