

**Third Sunday after Pentecost**  
**June 21, 2020**  
**Living Faith Lutheran, Sechelt, BC**  
**National Indigenous Peoples Day**

***Good News for Cowards***

*Jesus is more straightforward in today's gospel than we might want to hear. He makes it strikingly clear that there is danger in this life, especially in following Jesus in his way of love, mercy, justice, and compassion. There is danger because many forces oppose God's way because of fear, greed, and selfishness.*

*Just by saying these things, Jesus raises our anxiety and provokes our own worry. But he doesn't leave us there. In fact, he says outright, "Do not fear" (Matt. 10:28). And beyond that, he tells us why we do not need to be afraid: "You are valuable to God."*

*We might feel like cowards at times. Fear grips us. We find it difficult to act for the sake of the gospel when there is risk, be it physical, social, or financial. The word coward comes from the word for "tail," like an animal putting its tail between its legs. We want to put our tail between our legs and hide.*

*Jesus summons us to something else: courage. The word courage comes from the word for "heart." Sometimes we say to someone facing a difficult time, "Take heart!" Courage enables a person to act even though they are afraid. They act from their heart, their sense of who they really are. Jesus tells us who we really are: we are valuable to God, so our lives matter. We will not be forgotten or abandoned, especially when we face troubles. This is our heart, our courage.*

*Jesus also says, "It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher" (Matt. 10:25). Jesus faced ridicule, rejection, suffering, and death for his commitment to God's kingdom of love. We are not alone in our attempts to walk the way of love, mercy, justice, and compassion. Jesus, our teacher, walks this way with us. Take heart!*

**GATHERING**

**Gathering Song      #717    "Let Justice Flow"**

Let justice flow like streams of sparkling water, pure,  
enabling growth, refreshing life, abundant, cleansing, sure.

Let righteousness roll on as others' cares we heed,  
an ever-flowing stream of faith translated into deed.

So may God's plumb line, straight, define our measure true,  
and justice, right, and peace pervade this world our whole life through.

**Greeting**      In the name of the Creator, the Sustainer and the Giver of Life. **Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

Teach us, good God, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we do your will, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Brother. Amen.

### **WORD**

*The response to "Word of God. Word of Life." is "Thanks be to God."*

### **First Reading      Jeremiah 20:7-13**

<sup>7</sup>LORD, you have enticed me, and I was enticed;  
you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed.  
I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me.  
<sup>8</sup>For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, "Violence and destruction!"  
For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.  
<sup>9</sup>If I say, "I will not mention the Lord, or speak any more in the name of the Lord,"  
then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones;  
I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

<sup>10</sup>For I hear many whispering: "Terror is all around! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"  
All my close friends are watching for me to stumble.  
"Perhaps he can be enticed, and we can prevail against him, and take our revenge on him."  
<sup>11</sup>But the LORD is with me like a dread warrior;  
therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail.  
They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed.  
Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten.

<sup>12</sup>O LORD of hosts, you test the righteous, you see the heart and the mind;  
let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause.  
<sup>13</sup>Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD!  
For the Lord has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.

### **Second Reading      Romans 6:1b-11**

<sup>1</sup>What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For whoever has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

<sup>9</sup>We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup>The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

*Response before the reading: "Glory to you, O Lord."*

*Response after the reading: "Praise to you, O Christ."*

## **Holy Gospel                      Matthew 10:24-39**

<sup>24</sup>A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; <sup>25</sup>it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

<sup>26</sup>So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. <sup>27</sup>What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. <sup>28</sup>Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the hairs of your head are all counted. <sup>31</sup>So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup>Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; <sup>33</sup>but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup>Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; <sup>36</sup>and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

<sup>37</sup>Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup>and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

### **Sermon (actually a personal story and a call for action)**

Pentecost 3a, June 21, 2020

Matthew 10:24-39

LFLC

This is a reflection on the past few weeks, especially focussing on the anti-racism, "Black Lives Matter" response to the "murder" by the Minneapolis police officer of George Floyd who, after numerous times of crying out "I can't breathe", finally called out for his "mama". . .his "mama", and then went deathly silent.

And there are those other recent killings of black men and woman either by the police or, in the case of Ahmad Aubery, by the “citizens” in Georgia who claim that the jogger they surrounded, threatened and finally shot to death was a burglar—and they were just doing their civic duty in following him until he “threatened” them. . .even though they had a rifle, and he was in his jogging gear.

And as they struggled, he was shot twice in the chest before collapsing on the street. . .and while he was bleeding and dying, the last words he heard in this world were those of his killer calling him a “f\*\*\*ing N\*\*\*\*\*”.

Today I want to tell you a story—some of it is mine (and Trudy’s), and some of it comes from friends of ours.

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King was assassinated. . .and a number of major US cities with large inner-city populations of African-American residents—those cities exploded--and Detroit was one of many that experienced the fearsome tumult of marches, riots and some sections of the city set afire.

And those fires and riots happened within a few blocks of St. Philip’s Lutheran elementary school where Trudy had chosen to start teaching in September of 1967. While I was attending grad school in Detroit, we often attended worship together at the nearly all-black church associated with the school.

However, when we we were married on June 8, 1968---just two months after that assassination and those riots--the wedding took place in her home church where she had grown up—which was an all-white church in a virtually all-white suburb of Detroit.

She really impressed me with her insistence that we would invite the students she had taught, along with other students from that school, to attend our wedding. And so, in the late afternoon of June 8, a large yellow school bus pulled up at the main entrance of the church.

And about 30 or 40 black children, parents and teachers poured out and entered the doors of that place--ushered, at our request, to the very front of the sanctuary so that the young, and mostly small, children could see everything. . .and. . .to be honest, so that the longtime members already in their benches, could see. . .could not NOT see. . .these visitors. . .our guests.

Now, while it certainly was an attempt on our part to “make a statement”, that “statement” was this: That these were people who mattered to us; people we cared about; and people we wanted to share this significant event in our lives.

I am only mentioning this because I want you to know that, from the very beginning of our over-52-year-long love affair, that Trudy opened my eyes to a new world—a world of inequity and heartache for minorities. Since then, we have been and always will be especially attentive to and aware of the reality that “Black Lives Matter”—as do indigenous and brown lives as well--that is, Latino, Asian, Mideastern and South Asian people.

In our lives and thoughts, our beliefs and commitments, if “Black lives” don’t matter as much as White Lives, then NO LIVES REALLY MATTER. Similarly, as the phrase tells us truthfully: “If there is no justice for all, then there is no justice for anyone.”

Now, neither of us are naïve in imagining that everyone else, Christian or otherwise, agrees with us. And we know that, not simply because of Trudy’s experience in 1968 teaching school in the inner-city of Detroit, nor only because of her choice to teach at an inner-city school in St. Louis, Missouri, where I attended seminary for the next four years.

We also know that because of what we experienced at my internship congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio—a church which was located in sort of a suburb except it was near the centre of Cincinnati. As a result, Norwood was, for all intents and purposes, a blue-collar “white island” surrounded by a sea of mostly black neighbourhoods. And to get a feel for what that community was like, here is a short story.

When the pastor announced to the congregation before worship on a Sunday in early April of 1968 that he mourned the assassination of Dr. King three days earlier--when he said that, a significant number of members in church that day stood up and applauded—not in solidarity with him as fellow mourners—but in celebration that this “Commie Negro was finally dead!”

Now Norwood had a General Motors auto plant located within its municipal borders, and it was not only one of the major employers in the Cincinnati but it also employed a large number of African-American men from outside of Norwood (who weren’t allowed and didn’t want to live IN Norwood)—men who put themselves at some risk every single day by either driving or taking the bus to work.

If they drove, they never knew if their car would be vandalized, and if they took transit, they knew they would be harassed or taunted with racial slurs and epithets while walking from the bus stop to the auto plant.

And, they had more than enough reasons and experiences to warrant their fears--not only from the local citizenry but from the police who knew which side their bread was buttered on. . .and so did their best to make sure that the local rednecks could see the officers hassling and bullying the black “intruders” who, the locals were convinced, might not be workers at all but thieves and looters intent on robbing the local merchants of their money or goods.

After all, as the locals would say, “THOSE PEOPLE all look alike” which is why we need the police to watch them. . .or shopkeepers to follow them all around the store since they all look suspicious. . .and why we need “law-abiding citizens” to glare at them, swear at them, hassle them to the point of forcing them off the sidewalks to make they know that “they don’t belong here”.

“That’s terrible,” we say, “but that’s in the US,” we say. “It isn’t like that in Canada. We’re not racists.” Tell that to Indigenous people who were forced into church-run residential schools with the goal of eliminating their culture entirely and “saving their souls” while suffering physical, emotional and sexual abuse by religious leaders.

And how about the Komagata Maru in 1914 when 376 Sikh British citizens from India were refused entry into Canada? Or in 1939 when 900 Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis were refused entry and had to return to Europe where 254 eventually died in Concentration Camps? Not racist? Not intentionally, systemically racist? Then how about the following story as an example of what it is like in Canada for people of colour.

Most of the first 15 years of my ministry in Canada were spent in white, middle-class, theologically conservative Lutheran churches. And in one of them, my small office had just been expanded and renovated completely making it a much larger and lovely space with lots of big windows overlooking downtown Vancouver and the north shore mountains.

It was also about that same time that a father, mother and two young daughters—political refugees from Ethiopia--showed up at church one Sunday and, in short order, decided to join the congregation—a significant decision on their part since they were now the only black faces to be seen at worship.

The man was looking for work and because of his experience and background, I managed to arrange an interview for him with the newly-formed local “branch” office of Canadian Lutheran World Relief. He passed the interview with flying colours. However, his job required that he have someplace to work, and since he and his family lived in a very tiny apartment, he couldn’t work at home.

I now had a new big office at church that I really liked but didn’t really need because I had a spare room at home, so I offered the space to him to use. It was convenient because they lived not far away and he could walk to the office--and it was well-equipped with decent internet access which he needed to be able to connect remotely to CLWR’s head office in Winnipeg.

Anyway, one day not long after he started working in the office, one of the men who was a “big push” in the congregation—that is, a prominent and influential leader—he and I were having a conversation in the hallway and he asked me “Who let that N\*\*\*\*\* use the new office that we just spent a lot of money renovating for you?”

I was absolutely stunned, not at the question, but at his casual use of an utterly unacceptable word, and I replied: “That black man has a Ph.D from the University of Paris, speaks four languages, English and French among them, and worked for the United Nations High Commission on Refugees in Geneva, Switzerland, for 10 years. . .and is now the head of the refugee sponsorship programme of CLWR. And I gave him permission.”

I then turned on my heel and walked away before I say anything I would regret such as “. . .and ignorant racists like you have no business being leaders of a church. . .and won’t be for much longer if I have anything to say about it”.

I was so shocked and furious that I was shaking. . .and quickly realized that what I had just said in that moment of anger probably meant that my time as pastor there would soon be at an end.

And I was right, and I was not unhappy at the parting. . . and, to be honest, nor was that man unhappy at seeing my backside heading out the door.

That confrontation made me realize just how much Trudy and I—but especially she—missed the richness and the gifts of living in a diverse community—not just culturally diverse (which Vancouver was rapidly becoming over those early years) but a racially diverse community.

And so we were grateful for what what we experienced in the last parish I served in southeast Vancouver which, over the 20 years there, saw our membership change from almost completely white and middle-class to around 1/4 to 1/3 of our members being from various countries in Africa--South Sudan, Ethiopia, the Republic of Congo, Burundi, Ghana, South Africa and Rwanda. . . along with a raft of folks from China as well as South Korea, Iran, and the Philippines.

And most of them, being refugees or newcomers to Canada, were poor--struggling, not only with the learning English and finding places to live and to work, but struggling financially too because Greater Vancouver is an expensive place in which to live and the jobs they did get weren't well paid by any means.

We learned so much from them, not just about how difficult, even dangerous, their lives had been in the countries from which they came. . .nor only about their desire for a safe place for their children to grow up in and go to school—but we also learned so much from them about the idea--not heard much back then but far more common these days—the term and concept of “white privilege.”

And until those years, those relationships and those stories they told me, I must admit that I never really realized just how true it was and is. . .that as a “western, white, male”, I have won the lottery when it comes to life in this world.

Now, women--whether white and middle-class or, in particular, poor women and poor women of colour even more so—women have always faced, dealt with and suffered, and still suffer, from being treated as “second-class” citizens by men--whether in the workplace or on the street, in businesses or boardrooms, and, God forgive us, in the church as well where, up until 30 years ago, where they were permitted to serve food from the church kitchen but were prevented from serving wine at Holy Communion.

My point in all of this is to reinforce the reality that white males, and, even white females, enjoy the benefits of what is now known and named as “white privilege”.

I mean, with few exceptions, all of us who belong to this church grew up seeing commercials on TV or pictures in magazines and books featuring people who looked like us.

We always saw. . .and still see. . .posters or displays showing white people--like huge one just to the right of the main entrance to the “Home Hardware” store in Sechelt that depicts customers enjoying the products that they have purchased. . . and every single one of those five people featured--men, women and a child—are white and, at the very least, middle-class.

Not a person of colour is to be seen anywhere on that poster. . .and certainly not a poor or lower-income person of colour--not even someone who is indigenous—on whose traditional and unceded territory that hardware store plies its trade.

And, most probably, few of us, including me until a couple of weeks ago, ever even noticed the colour of those people on the poster. And even fewer of us, if we had noticed, would ever do what I finally did this past week and go inside and express my objections to the franchise owner. . .and encourage him to send an email to the headquarters of Home Hardware in Kitchener, Ontario, to register my complaint.

Now, the owner did tell me that would let the headquarters know of my objection, but felt that his “one voice” wouldn’t make much difference. And maybe he is right. But what there were five or 15 emails or 50 emails to the headquarters stating our objection to such a blatant example of racism? Might that make a difference?

I’m also sure that some of you have already witnessed this subtle or overt kind of racism when we see a person who is “Asian”—and therefore assumed to be from China where the virus began. . .which, therefore, makes it okay to threaten them with loud comments like these: “Why don’t you people go back where you came from?”

Or how about when someone is talking to another person in a foreign language, to hear a heckler bark out: “Speak English. You are in Canada now, you know!”—the heckler being completely ignorant or uncaring about the fact that she or lives in a country where French is the second official language—a language the bully is unlikely to speak and if she or he does refer to Quebec at all it might well have some sort of derogatory slur prefacing or following it.

Richard Rohr, the Franciscan brother, lecturer, author and founder of a community in New Mexico--Richard Rohr put it this way in a recent meditation:

*Those of us who are white have a very hard time seeing that we constantly receive special treatment because of social systems built to prioritize people with white skin.*

*This systemic “white privilege” makes it harder for us to recognize the experiences of people of color as valid and real when they speak of racial profiling, police brutality, discrimination in the workplace, continued segregation in schools, lack of access to housing, and so on.*

*Since these things are not the experience of most white people, how can they be true? Now, we are being shown how limited our vision is.*

*Because we have never been on the other side, we largely do not recognize the structural access we enjoy, the trust we think we deserve, the assumption that we always belong and do not have to earn our place. All this we take for granted as normal.*



*And so we've willingly supported systems and laws and government policies that work to our own advantage at the expense of others. Indeed, the advancement of the white race and white people has, for far too often and far too long, been at the cost of other people not advancing at all. And such power and privilege never surrenders without a fight.*

What that concept and those words mean to me is that as long as those “below” us on the ladder—whether they are economic, social, racial, colour, privilege or power ladders—as long as those “others” (that is, those “not like us”) below us or beneath us are compliant and quiet and agree to “stay in their places” – ***“Stay in your place, boy; remember your place, girl”***. . .

as long as they stay silent, we will continue to misunderstand and misinterpret their eventual resistance and rebellion as “anger” instead of what it really is: Grief. Profound grief at what. . . and at whom. . . and at all that they have lost or had stolen from them or prevented them having--and continue to prevent them having. . . just because of their colour.

Now, surely some of you have got to be thinking: “What does all of this have to do with today’s readings. . . especially the gospel reading?”

Well, let me suggest this: That in the reading from Matthew 10, when and where Jesus says that “whoever loves father or mother or son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”—he is not saying that we are to reject or renounce those very close and loving relationships.

Instead, at least as far as I understand him, he is saying that we need to be ready and willing to follow him even though the cost may be. . . will be. . . high—higher than we ever expected or wanted.

Now, I want to say here that no matter what we do or say whether right or wrong, we will never be “worthy” enough for him to love us, but, thanks be to God, he has made us “worthy” by and in and through his death and resurrection.

In the same way, as he says, we will never “save” our lives—that is, our positions and places of privilege--by trying to hold on to them at any cost, but will only “save” or “find” ourselves by “losing” ourselves in the love of others. . .

by “giving up” our ‘privileged status’ in order to share the sorrows, the suffering and the losses and fears—and the struggles—of those who are not ‘privileged’ as we are. . . but who are loved, accepted, welcomed, embraced and made one with Christ just as they are. . . and just as we are made one in Christ.

We are not “worthy” of Christ’s love because we are white, male or female; western or African or Central American or East or South Asian); or upper or middle class or in the barely-getting-by-class.

We are not worthy because we are law-abiding or law-breaking citizens; nor because we are conscientious at work. . .or work from home. . .or don't work for pay at all. . .or have just lost our job.

We are not worthy because we are healthy and strong or vulnerable and anxious; or because we are positive and hopeful rather than depressed and discouraged.

None of those things that make up how others define us or how we define ourselves makes us worthy in the sight of God. But God's grace does. Christ's love does. The Spirit's presence does.

So why is it that we define others or treat others as if they are not worthy of our love and care, our support and our voices?

And I ask that because many of those people of colour that Trudy and I have met over our lives whom we love—one of them being our dear-to-our hearts God-daughter of African descent who just graduated from SFU on the Dean's list--many of them, she included, have been made to feel unworthy. . . or unacceptable. . .by the very people who claim to be followers of Jesus and, because they wear a cross around their necks, consider that act and that piece of jewelry to be fulfillment of the call to "take up the cross and follow me".

It is people like us who need to listen, to learn, to examine ourselves. . .and then to change: To change by remembering Jesus' words and Rohr's words and Otis Moss's words and Martin Luther King Jr's words about "giving up" our lives and attitudes, assumptions and benefits of privilege. . .and "finding our new lives" in service, in compassion and in providing comfort to others.

But one last caution here: Giving "comfort" is not meant in the sense of "Now, now, just be quiet and good and and stay in your place and wait for heaven when you will get your reward for all your suffering".

It is not that at all. In fact, the word "comfort" literally means "to be strong together". Thus to give comfort is to say and then to act on what we say—to act on our conviction that "We are in this together. . . we will stand together. . .we will be strong together. . .we will grieve together. . .and, by God, we will overcome. . . together.

**We will overcome some day. . .and we will do it together."**

May it be so soon. . .and may it be so always.

Amen.

SDG

**Song of the Day #704 "When Pain of the World Surrounds Us"**

1. When pain of the world surrounds us with darkness and despair  
when searching just confounds us with false hopes everywhere,  
when lives are starved for meaning and destiny is bare,

we are called to follow Jesus and let God's healing flow through us.

2. We see with fear and trembling our aching world in need,  
confessing to each other our wastefulness and greed.  
May we with steadfast caring the hungry children feed.  
We are called to follow Jesus and let God's justice flow through us.

The church is a holy vessel the living waters fill  
to nourish all the people, God's purpose to fulfill.  
May we with humble courage be open to God's will.  
We are called to follow Jesus and let God's Spirit flow through us.

We praise you for our journey and your abundant grace,  
your saving word that guided a struggling human race.  
O God, with all creation, your future we embrace.  
We are called to follow Jesus and let God's changes flow through us.

**Prayers of Intercession**      *The prayers are written by Pastor Janaki Bandara, a Lutheran woman of colour from the Eastern Synod of the ELCIC*

As we meditate on our historical, current and future relationships with the Indigenous peoples of this, our home on Native Land, let us join our hearts and minds together, seeking our spirits growing with creation and finding healing through God's grace.

Incomparable Creator, from nothing you made each human being, you made each mountain and valley, you routed each river and stream. We know that, in human terms, Indigenous children were taken from their families to residential schools; cultures and languages were robbed and destroyed under claims of civilization; Indigenous women and girls still go missing and murdered.

Though these things happen in human terms, for you, Creator not one is missing, not one is lost. You call each person, each culture, each nation by name. Help us to find our strength as sojourners on the reconciliation journey, in YOU.

Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Counsellor: help us in the work of discernment, between the seductive, politicized concept of reconciliation or likes and follows on social media. Help us in the work of discernment, towards real initiatives of real relationships with real people. Give us courage for the encounters. Give us humility for the address of hurts: both past and present. Give us patience, love and compassion. Show us how to use the tools and examples of Jesus.

Jesus, you join us for this journey. You are the sojourner's example and guide, caring not for the establishment of empire, but reaching, instead, for the hardened hearts of the privileged, and the hurting hearts of the marginalized. You are the signatory on our reconciliation with God, with Creation, with each other. In you, it is done.

As your followers, living in THIS age, empower us to be ushers of your Kingdom: the divine Kingdom of justice, peace and love. Direct us into one family, bound by compassion, mercy and love. Grant us grace to rely on your will for the wellbeing and unity of all.

We dare to ask for much in these prayers, trusting in you, Divine One: to fill in our blank spots, to meet our shorfalls, to lift us up on eagles wings, in Jesus' precious & Holy name. Amen.

Sharing of the Peace/Offering of ourselves, our time and our possessions

*At this time, worshippers may wish to use and follow the video of the Prayer of Thanksgiving. Alternatively, everyone is encouraged to continue reading the blessing of the bread and wine which we share in our homes with those in the church building and with all who gather around tables or among friends everywhere in the world.*

### **Offering Prayer**

God of abundance, you have poured out a large measure of earthly blessings: our table is richly furnished, our cup overflows, and we live in safety and security. Teach us to set our hearts on you and not these material blessings. Keep us from becoming captivated by prosperity, and grant us the wisdom to use your blessings for the wellbeing of others, and so bring glory to you and healing to humankind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **MEAL**

*The gifts of bread and wine for each person may be set in place near at hand for their blessing*

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

God is with us. Therefore, let us pray in gratitude for all things beneficial and liberating.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,  
    you have brought us this far along the way.  
In times of bitterness you did not abandon us,  
    but guided us into the path of love and light.  
In every age you sent prophets  
    to make known your loving will for all humanity.  
The cry of the poor has become your own cry;  
    our hunger and thirst for justice is your own desire.  
In the fullness of time, you sent your chosen servant  
    to preach good news to the afflicted,  
    to break bread with the outcast and despised,  
    and to ransom those in bondage to prejudice and sin.

In the night in which he was betrayed, (*the bread may be raised*)  
    our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks (+);  
    broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, (*the cup/s may be raised*),  
gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup  
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection,  
we await the day when Jesus shall return  
to free all the earth from the bonds of slavery and death.  
Come, Lord Jesus! And let the church say, Amen. **Amen!**

Send your Holy Spirit, our advocate,  
to fill the hearts of all who share this bread and cup  
with courage and wisdom to pursue love and justice in all the world.  
Come, Spirit of freedom! And let the church say, Amen. **Amen!**

Join our prayers and praise with your prophets and martyrs of every age,  
that, rejoicing in the hope of the resurrection,  
we might live in the freedom and hope of your Son.  
Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honour is yours, Eternal One, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **The prayer Jesus taught us**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.

**Invitation**     Taste and see that our God is good.

## SENDING

### **Prayer after the Meal**

Gracious God, in this meal you have drawn us to your heart and nourished us at your table with food and drink, the living presence of the living Christ. Now send us forth to be your people in the world, and to proclaim this truth this day and evermore, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

### ***Benediction***

The God of steadfastness and encouragement  
grant us to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The God of all grace ✠ bless us now and forever. **Amen.**

### **Sending Song #841 “Lift Every Voice and Sing”**

*The text of this hymn, written by the African-American poet, James Weldon Johnson, and the tune composed by his brother, John Rosamund Johnson, was designated the black American “National Anthem” in 1916. It speaks not only of the hardships and trials of the past but also sings out the hope for a new and just future.*

1. Lift ev’ry voice and sing till earth and heaven ring,  
ring with the harmonies of liberty.  
Let our rejoicing rise high as the list’ning skies,  
let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us;  
sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
facing the rising sun of our new day begun, let us march on till victory is won.

2. Stony the road we trod, bitter the chast’ning rod,  
felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet  
come to the place for which our parents sighed?

We have come over a way that with tears has been watered;  
we have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last  
where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

3. God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,  
thou who hast brought us thus far on the way,  
thou who hast by thy might led us into the light, keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee;  
lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee;  
shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand,  
true to our God, true to our native land.

**Dismissal**

Go in peace and care for the poor; honour everyone you meet; act with justice for all.

**Thanks be to God.**