

## WORSHIP ON THE LORD'S DAY

The Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 3, 2020

Lyons-Muir Church & Ionia First United Methodist Church

Guest Speaker, the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Browne  
Director of Clergy Excellence  
Michigan Conference, The United Methodist Church

### I. CENTERING OUR HEARTS & MINDS FOR WORSHIP

#### Prelude

#### “My Friend”

*written and performed by Take 6 & Ray Charles*

It doesn't matter where you say ya been,  
it doesn't matter whatcha done.  
The same color blood  
that's runnin' through my veins,  
is the color that sustains another one.  
I know that you might-a had a hard time,  
and maybe you thought of givin' in,  
But no matter where you stand  
it's not too much to lend my hand:  
You're my neighbor, you're my brother  
and you're my friend

My friend... you're my friend...  
yes you are!

Well I know that you might get a little  
lonely sometimes,  
you know I been down that road before;  
And when my so-called friends  
were takin' each other in,  
I couldn't even make it  
through the door.  
So why don't you come on in  
take a load off your mind  
And I dare to choose to wear  
the shoes that you're in  
No matter where you stand  
it's not too much to lend my hand,

Cause You're my neighbor, you're my  
brother and you're my friend

My friend... you're my friend... yes you  
are!

I'm throwin' out that lifeline  
Just tryin' to spread some sunshine  
'Cause I got a lotta love for mankind  
So why don't you call me sometime  
and I'll be by your side  
Now hold on a minute,  
make sure you don't forget  
I'll be there when you call me -  
just say when  
No matter where you stand  
it's not too much to lend my hand:  
You're my neighbor, you're my brother  
and you're my friend

Oh yes you are my friend!  
Oh!... My sister! My friend!  
Brother! All you do is call  
and I will be there in a flash  
My friend!  
You'll never find a better - Oh!  
My friend oh, My friend!

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Let us pray:

**God of Grace, calling us always to share your eternal life, you have given us minds to know you, hearts to love you, and voices to sing your praise. Fill us with your Spirit, Almighty God, that our celebration of your glory might give you joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Welcome & Announcements**

- Welcome to any new comers or visitors
- PDF script of worship
- Offerings: Please mail your offering to the church address.
- Bishop’s Order – May 15
- Pastoral Care and Prayer Concerns
- the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Browne

**Opening Hymn**

**“Shepherd Me, O God”**

*written and performed by Marty Haugen*

**Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,  
beyond my fears, from death into life.**

1 God is my shepherd, so nothing shall I want,  
I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love,  
I walk by the quiet waters of peace. **[Refrain]**

2 Gently you raise me and heal my weary soul,  
you lead me by pathways of righteousness and  
truth, my spirit shall sing the music of your  
name. **[Refrain]**

3 Though I should wander the valley of death,  
I fear no evil, for you are at my side, your rod  
and your staff, my comfort and my hope.  
**[Refrain]**

4 You have set me a banquet of love in the face  
of hatred, crowning me with love beyond my  
power to hold. **[Refrain]**

5 Surely your kindness and mercy follow me all  
the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of  
my God forevermore. **[Refrain]**

## **The Confession & Absolution of Our Sins**

Wonderful is the matchless grace of God- the Creator, the Spirit of Life, and the Word of Truth: the LORD knew that it would cost the agony of the Cross for human beings to fully understand Good and Evil. Even so, God created us, set us free for flourishing life, and made a way to be in love with us forever. Therefore, let us turn to God once more with our whole heart as we confess our sins:

*Observe a time of silent confession in the presence of Almighty God.*

Come, O Holy Spirit, Friend and Advocate of sinners:  
come as a Holy Fire and burn in us;  
come as a Holy Wind and cleanse us;  
come as Holy Light and lead us through the darkness;  
come as Holy Truth and dispel our ignorance;  
come as Holy Power and overcome our weakness;  
come as Holy Life and abide with us.  
Convict us, convert us, and consecrate us,  
until we are entirely set free from service to ourselves  
to be your servants in the world. Amen.

Dear friends, hear the Good News: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and God vindicated his love by raising him from the dead. More than any other sign, this proves God's love for us. Let us fight against our God no more, but rise up to our great calling in the joy of the LORD: for in the Name of Jesus, I say to you that your sins are forgiven.

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.**

May the Peace of Jesus Christ, keep our hearts and minds in this life, and in the life to come.  
**Thanks be to God!**

## Celebration and Praise

## “What A Friend”

*performed by AJ Mayer & Jonathan Bratt Carle*

Everybody has trials and temptations  
Everybody knows heart break, isolation  
But we can lay our burdens down

Everybody has fears, everybody got worries  
Everybody knows sorrow, devastation  
But we can lay our burdens down [R]

What a friend we have in Jesus  
East to west my sins are gone  
I see grace on every horizon  
And forever and ever His heart is my home

No more betrayal, for He is faithful  
He fills me up and my cup runneth over  
Over and over [R]

Text and Music by Matt Maher

## II. THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

O Lord, open our lips,  
**And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Almighty Creator, before his passion Jesus prayed for his disciples that they might be one, as you and he are one: Grant that in the reading of the scriptures and the proclamation of your Living Word, your Church might be more fully joined to you. Bind us together in love and obedience to you, that the world might receive him whom you have sent: the Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(adapted from the Book of Common Prayer)

### **The Prophecy of the Good Shepherd** **Ezekiel 34: 1-16**

The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them—to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord God: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them.

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: As I live, says the Lord God, because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds

have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: Thus says the Lord God, I am against the shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them.

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

The Word of the Lord  
**Speaks truth and justice.**

*Observe a moment of silence.*

### A Psalm of David, 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.

*Observe a moment of silence.*

**Lord Jesus Christ, our good shepherd, in the waters of Baptism you give us birth, and at your Table you nourish us with heavenly food. Lead us now along safe paths, beyond the terrors of evil and death, to the dwelling of the LORD where we may rest, secure in you forever. Amen.**

**The New of Life in Christ**  
**Romans 6: 1-13**

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

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. 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. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness.

The Word of the Lord  
**Turns Death into Life!**

*Observe a moment of silence.*

**Hymn of Preparation**

**“Wonderful Grace of Jesus”**  
*sung by Praise & Harmony*

Wonderful Grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin;  
How shall my tongue describe it, where shall its praise begin?  
Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free;  
O the Wonderful Grace of Jesus reaches me!

**Wonderful the matchless Grace of Jesus,  
the matchless Grace of Jesus,  
Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;  
Higher than the mountain,  
sparkling like a fountain,  
All sufficient Grace for even me.  
Broader than the scope of my transgressions,  
Greater far than all my sin and shame  
O magnify the precious name of Jesus, Praise his name!**

Wonderful Grace of Jesus, reaching to all the lost;  
By it I have been pardoned, saved to the uttermost.  
Chains have been torn asunder, giving me liberty;  
O the Wonderful Grace of Jesus, reaches me! **[Refrain]**

Wonderful Grace of Jesus, reaching the most defiled;  
By its transforming power, making me God's dear child,  
Purchasing peace and Heaven, for all eternity;  
And the Wonderful Grace of Jesus, reaches me! **[Refrain]**

Hymn: Haldor Lillenas (1885-1959)  
Tune: *Wonderful Grace*, by the same.

### **The Holy Gospel, according to John, 10: 1-18**

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because

I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise be to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Observe a moment of silence.*

**Reflecting on the Scriptures: “But We Are Not Sheep”**  
the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Browne, guest speaker

In late March and early April, the sign in front of the First Baptist Church of American in Providence, RI, said this: Had not planned on giving up quite this much for Lent.”

Indeed. None of us, I think it’s safe to say, had planned on giving up this much.

It’s not Lent anymore, but it doesn’t really feel like Easter to me. I’m still wandering around in the wilderness, long past the usual 40 days, trying to figure out what’s safe and what’s not, adjusting to being home almost all the time, worried about others and feeling pretty helpless when it comes to helping them.

And I know I’m one of the lucky ones! So many others have much more significant things on their minds –

- their jobs,
- their health,
- the health of loved ones,
- grieving the loss of loved ones.

Into this time and place of anxiety and fear, insecurity and death, comes this lectionary passage about Jesus the Good Shepherd. Usually this is an easy theme for preachers. This year it begs to be contradicted, or at least questioned. Really, Jesus? *Are* you a Good Shepherd? What were you doing when this virus snuck through the gate?

The image is meant to be comforting: Jesus as the Good Shepherd who gathers his sheep and uses his very self as the gate to the sheepfold, preventing thieves and robbers from entering and doing harm. We *want* to be reassured, to think of ourselves as one of Jesus’ flock, known by name and protected by Jesus. But it’s challenging to feel that way right now, surrounded as we are by danger and fear.



What happens to the sheep when the wolves get in?

Most of us do not know much about sheep. Maybe some of you do. My guess is that most of you are more like me. My experience with sheep is quite limited. I have encountered them at county fairs and on trips to Greenfield Village where I watched sheep-shearing and learned to watch where I stepped.

I have come to understand that sheep are not very intelligent. It has been said that God created sheep in order to make chickens look smart.

In contrast, Jesus' listeners knew a lot about sheep. When Jesus spoke about shepherds and sheep, he was speaking to people who had everyday experiences with sheep and lambs, goats and kids. They drank the milk of those animals, turned that milk into cheese, used their wool...and ate them for dinner.

Jesus' listeners knew a lot about sheep and they were used to hearing God described as their Good Shepherd.

- They knew the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm just as we do, "The Lord is my Shepherd."
- They knew the 79<sup>th</sup> Psalm, we are "your people and the sheep of your pasture."
- They knew that in the book of the prophet Ezekiel, God declares "I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out...I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep....." (Ezek 34:11).

The earliest Christians were familiar with the same image. As we heard in today's reading, John's Gospel uses it as one of many images that expresses who Jesus is: the vine, the bread of life, the living water, the light of the world.

Here he is the good shepherd, who leads his sheep out to find abundant pasture, and he is the gate that protects his flock from thieves and robbers.

On the wall of the the earliest known house church, located in what is now Syria, there is a fresco (a mural) of the shepherd Jesus carrying a lamb upon his shoulders. It is painted above the spot where the baptismal font stood, the symbol of entry into Christian life.

Even now, when so few of us know anything about sheep or shepherds, the image is compelling: Jesus guides and protects and provides throughout all of life, at the beginning and at the end.

Compelling, and perhaps for some of us, at this point, challenging. How is Jesus guiding us now? How is Jesus protecting us now?

Rev. Laura Mendenhall grew up in farming territory and, unlike most of the rest of us, does know something about sheep. In contrast to our mental picture of the shepherd leading the flock from in front - like the drum major in front of a marching band, she says that much of a shepherd's leading actually comes from the back.

In order to keep the sheep from overgrazing their pastures, she says, shepherds have to move their flocks frequently. But they can't do this by charging out in front and shouting orders to them. "Here sheep, sheep, sheep, come this way. Follow me, sheep, turn here." If they were to try to guide their sheep this way, the animals would probably just turn around and go in the opposite direction.

Instead shepherds work from behind – talking, singing, coaxing, and encouraging, giving orders to the dogs who nip at the sheep's heels to keep them going. The shepherds keep an eye on the stragglers and the wanderers, the injured and the sick; they pay special attention to the ones who are most vulnerable to being left behind and set upon by predators.

The sheep may not recognize the shepherd's face, because they rarely see it. But they do recognize the shepherd's voice, encouraging them from behind, and they trust it.

You and I may not know much about sheep, but the comparison is easy to recognize. Like the sheep, and especially right now, we are aware that we live in a world that is filled with abundance...and danger.

- Doing our shopping in a face mask;
- washing our hands and wondering if we should wash the groceries, too;
- deciding whether venturing out of the house is worth it or not.

We feel as vulnerable as sheep.

No wonder we wish Jesus would be out in front, fending off all danger, directing us to the safe route, keeping us from making mistakes and creating our own dangers.

No wonder we wish he'd show us exactly where to go and what to do. Then we would have someone else to blame when things go wrong!

But Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and he usually leads from behind.

- He does not shout orders, but offers wisdom and guidance.
- He pays special attention to the most vulnerable – the sick, the injured, the very young and the very old, the ones left behind.
- When we get ourselves into trouble, he picks us up.
- Most of the time he asks us to trust what we know.

Because in reality we are *not* sheep. Real sheep cannot be fairly expected to think for themselves. (Remember why God created chickens?) A shepherd's reason for gathering sheep together and protecting them is to fatten them up for the slaughter. Sheep are kept safe in the sheepfold, they are led to green pastures and protected from wolves, because they are going to be sold and eaten.

But we are not sheep! There are limits to all analogies and metaphors and we have found this one. We are gathered and guarded not for slaughter and not to be eaten, but for love and redemption and service.

The abundant life that our Good Shepherd leads us to is one of amazing grace and endless love. We can trust our shepherd to pay attention when we are vulnerable, to care for us when we are sick or injured, to seek us out when we wander into dangerous territory.

We are led to a life in which we can trust the shepherd's voice even when we do not see his face. But it is not a life free of risks or commitments.

Jesus knew this all too well. Because he is not only the shepherd and the gate, but also the lamb. Please listen carefully now. Jesus is the lamb, but he is not sacrificed to pay some sort of debt, or to satisfy God's wrath that cannot be appeased in any other way. Those are all theories of "atonement" developed much later in the history of the church. Particularly in John's Gospel, Jesus is not the Lamb because he pays a penalty but because in his death he reveals who God is, and how unconquerable God's love is.

Following the Good Shepherd all the way to the cross means that in the face of danger, we know security; that in the grip of sorrow or fear, we are sustained by love.

It means that when we walk on paths we would not choose for ourselves, we listen for the voice of the Shepherd and respond to his guidance, for we recognize that he knows where we're headed better than we do.

Being one of Jesus' flock does not mean that death will not come, that tragedy will not strike, that our hearts will not be broken. It means that whatever befalls us, we still know the presence and strength of God:

The Lord is my Shepherd,

Even though I walk through the corridors of the ICU, I will not fear death...  
Though I pass through the valleys of depression or delusion, I am not alone...  
Though I may test positive or love someone who does, I will fear no evil...  
Though people may shun me, I will not lose heart...  
For you anoint me...guard me...love me....

Jesus is the shepherd: he leads us to lives of abundant grace.

Jesus is the gate: he places himself between us and all that would destroy our faith and take away our true humanity.

Jesus is the lamb: he chose to follow the path that led to death but resulted in life. He submitted himself in order to reveal God's self.

Others may try to lead us, others may claim to be our shepherd, but we know the voice of Jesus. We know the way that he leads. Not armed with swords or hate of fear, but with courage and faith, leading us to pastures of peace.

In mid-March, just as the real danger of Covid-19 was making itself known to most of us in the United States, and as the shortages of protective equipment for medical workers was becoming evident, Joseph Alonso, chief stonemason for the National Cathedral in Washington DC remembered something important.

He remembered that 14 years ago, during an outbreak of the H5N1 flu, the Cathedral had purchased more than 5000 N95 respiratory masks – the kind that medical workers need to protect themselves and that were in tragic short supply.

The Cathedral had made the purchase as a precaution for during pastoral care visits, for the safety of the cleaning staff, and for other staff members who had to deal with the public. But they turned out not to be necessary in 2006 and they were stashed away in an unfinished area of the crypt level of the cathedral. In other words, this protective, life-saving equipment lay just feet away from the tombs of many famous Americans.

The masks were technically expired, but the hospitals in Washington DC were desperate. And on March 25, 3000 of them were delivered to Georgetown University Hospital and 2,000 to Children’s National Hospital.

It might not feel like any other Easter we’ve known before, but it is Easter! The rock is rolled away, the tomb is empty, and God’s life-giving, life-saving Spirit is out among us. We – who can act just like sheep sometimes – are called by God to think and act like the human disciples we truly are. Sharing our resources, sharing love and life, trusting the Good Shepherd who moves us forward into the new pastures and places that are waiting for us.

Let’s close in prayer, using one that we often hear at funerals. But we pray it today not because we are at the end, but because we know our Good Shepherd and we follow his voice from beginning all the way to the end:

Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend ourselves, your servants.

Acknowledge, we humbly pray:

The sheep of your own fold,

The lambs of your own flock,

The sinners of your own redeeming.

Receive us into the arms of your mercy,

into the blessed rest of everlasting peace,

And into the glorious company of the saints of light. Amen.

### Works Referenced in the Sermon

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### III. RESPONDING TO THE LIVING WORD

The Affirmation of Faith

St. Patrick of Ireland (373? - 463?)  
trans. Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)

I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity  
by invocation of the same: the Three in One and One in Three.

I bind this day to me forever,  
by power of faith, Christ's incarnation,  
his baptism in the Jordan river,  
his death on cross for my salvation,  
his bursting from the spiced tomb,  
his riding up the heavenly way,  
his coming at the day of doom,  
I bind unto myself today.

I bind unto myself today the power of God to hold and lead,  
God's eye to watch, God's might to stay, God's ear to hearken to my need.

Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

I bind unto myself the name, the strong name of the Trinity  
by invocation of the same, the Three in One and One in Three:

of whom all nature has creation,  
eternal Father, Spirit, Word.  
Praise to the Lord of my salvation;  
salvation is of Christ the Lord!

The Offering

“St. Patrick’s Breastplate”

*sung by Trinity Music & Marty Reardon*

Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me.

Christ in the hearts of all who think of me  
Christ on the lips of all who speak of me  
Christ in every eye that looks upon me  
Christ in every ear that hears me

Let it be so with me.  
Have your way, I bend the knee.

*Please send in your offering each week (or month) through the mail.  
Contact the church if you need assistance with your offering.*

The Prayers of the People

Let us offer our prayers to God, saying,  
**“Lord, hear our prayer.”**

Merciful God, we pray for all who claim the love of Christ: that we may no longer be sheep, cast about by the confusions of the world, but a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, to his praise and glory.  
**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for David, our Bishop, and for all other ministers, giving thanks especially today for your servant Jennifer. Grant courage to all who preach the Gospel; keep them faithful in their calling. And may all your people stand on the promise of Eternal Life, caring for the those suffer and proclaiming the love of Christ by word, thought, and deed.  
**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the leaders of the nations, and for all in authority: that they may guide us in the ways of healing, justice, and peace.  
**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for Ionia, Muir, Lyons, and all the communities in which we live. Bless all who share life alongside us: the poor and the rich; the elderly and the young; those with families and those who are alone; those who are rejoicing and those who are in sorrow. Show your lovingkindness to all, gracious God, and inspire in us the mind of Christ.  
**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the victims of domestic and sexual violence: that they might find safe means of communicating with those who can offer protection and healing.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are losing their homes, their livelihoods, their retirement savings, and their communities because of this global sickness called Coronavirus: that society would not forget those experiencing any poverty of body, mind, or spirit.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We give you thanks, Almighty God, for the saints of every age, who, by the practice of their faith, revealed your providence in times of adversity and suffering. Especially this day we remember your Prophet Ezekiel, by whose faithful word in the Exile your people received the Good News of your justice. So enlighten us in our exile with visions of your New Creation, that we might become shepherds to those who are lost, friendless, and without hope.

**Lord hear our prayer.**

And now, O God, grant us your mercy as we open our secret hearts to you, and as we name those who are in particular need of your love:

*Observe a time of silent prayer.*

**Our Father... who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from Evil: for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

### Hymn of Exaltation

### **“What A Friend We Have in Jesus”**

*performed by Aretha Franklin (and them as what worshipped with her)*

1. What a friend we have in Jesus  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
Oh what peace we often forfeit  
Oh what needless pain we bear  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer

2. Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged  
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness  
Take it to the Lord in prayer

3. Are we weak and heavy laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge  
Take it to the Lord in prayer  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In his arms he'll take and shield thee  
Thou wilt find a solace there

Hymn: Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819-1886)

Tune: Charles C. Converse (1832-1918)



#### IV. GOING FORTH IN MINISTRY

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common and private prayers to you; and you have promised, through your well-beloved Son, that when two or three gather in your Name, you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and prayers of your servants, as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. **Amen**

the prayer of St. John Chrysostom (347-407)

#### **Commissioning**

Brother and Sisters in Jesus Christ,  
go now in confidence wherever the Spirit guides you.  
You have been set apart with gifts to lead the world to Christ:  
with every word of kindness and forgiveness,  
every deed of justice and generosity,  
every prayer of compassion and intercession,  
guide this suffering world to the Living God.

#### **Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord lift his countenance upon you  
and give you peace.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you,  
and be gracious unto you.

Amen.

Numbers 6: 24-26  
*sung by Acapeldrige*