

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.  
May we together experience the presence of God*

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***We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord***

**Prelude**

**Welcome**



**“Love Never Ends:  
“Being the Body of Christ”**

**Week 4**

Does it feel cliché to focus on love in worship? Does it seem that we might need something more profound? Actually, there isn't anything more profound than love as the determining force that motivates all that we do as the church. It begins, of course, with the desire to love God more. We're called to love with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. That seems pretty all encompassing.

Can we honestly say that we love God with that kind of passion and fervor? Can we say that all our thoughts each and every day are, “How can I show love to God today? In this decision? In this action? With these words?”

And then to love our neighbor as ourselves. Some point out that loving ourselves is key to this formula. That may be true; as we have discussed the last two Sundays, we are called to see ourselves as worth something in God's community we call the church. We do matter, as we've reflected before. And now the call is to love our neighbor as though they were us, our own flesh and blood, our own bodies.

Do we love like that?

Do we examine our own behaviors not just for what is good for us, but for what is good for the community around us, or for the world?

We have the amazing and extensive description of love in our text for today. Even at our best, do we measure up to this picture of love? Even with those closest to us, let alone the neighboring world around us, we can all ask to be more loving, as the song says, not just in our hearts, but in our hands and our words, and our intentions. This is a high calling, not a soft response to the neediness of the world in which we live, let alone the demands of a holy life. We pray for help, for Spirit-empowered wisdom to love like this.

So, as we worship, let us sing about loving; let us pray to be more loving; let us listen to the scriptural stories of powerful and transforming love, all with the intention of shaping our everyday lives along the pattern Paul describes in I Corinthians 13.

## **A Call to Worship**

Adapted from a post on the United Church of Christ's Worship Ways Archive. <http://www.ucc.org/>  
Reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/01/call-to-worship-we-have-come.html>.

### **Call to Worship**

Today, the words of God come to us, in love,  
**inviting us to not be afraid, but to place our faith in God.**

Today, the word of God comes to us, in faith,  
**inviting us to trust in the One who knows us,  
to place our hope in the One who saves us.**

Today, the Word of God comes to us, in hope,  
**inviting us to be gracious in our love and in our service to others.**

### **OPENING PRAYER**

**(based on 1 Corinthians 13:1-13)**

Written by Carol Penner and Posted on Leading in Worship.  
<http://carolpenner.typepad.com/leadinginworship>. Reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/01/opening-prayer-faith-hope-and-love.html>.

**God of Gods:**

**We come to worship today to hear your good news,  
to hear of faith, hope and love  
ringing out from your kingdom.  
We know that doubt, fear and hatred  
can shake even the strongest.  
Shape us into faithful hopeful people,  
fill us with your love that passes all understanding.  
We pray this together in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.**

**Hymn UMH 389 "Freely, Freely"**

*Author: Carol Owens (1972)  
Copyright: © 1972 Bud John Songs (ASCAP)(admin. by EMI CMG Publishing).*

**God forgave my sin in Jesus' name  
I've been born again in Jesus' name  
And in Jesus' name I come to you  
To share His love as He told me to**

**He said, "Freely, freely you have  
received  
Freely, freely give  
Go in my name, and because you  
believe  
Others will know that I live"**

**All power is givin' in Jesus' name  
In earth and Heaven in Jesus' name  
And in Jesus' name I come to you  
To share His power as He told me to**

**He said, "Freely, freely you have  
received  
Freely, freely give  
Go in my name, and because you  
believe  
Others will know that I live"**

## ***We Hear God's Word***

**New Testament Reading..... 1 Corinthians 13  
New Revised Standard Version**

## **The Gift of Love**

*13 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,[a] but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.*

*11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly,[b] but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.*

The word of God for the People of God, **Thanks Be to God**

## **Children's Message**

### **Faith Hymn UMH 145 "Morning Has Broken"**

*Author: Eleanor Farjeon (1931)*

*Copyright: By permission of David Higham Associates Limited, London*

**1 Morning has broken  
Like the first morning,  
Blackbird has spoken  
Like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing!  
Praise for the morning!  
Praise for them, springing  
Fresh from the Word!**

**2 Sweet the rain's new fall  
Sunlit from Heaven,  
Like the first dewfall  
On the first grass.  
Praise for the sweetness**

**Of the wet garden,  
Sprung in completeness  
Where his feet pass.**

**3 Mine is the sunlight,  
Mine is the morning,  
Born of the one light  
Eden saw play.  
Praise with elation,  
Praise every morning,  
God's re-creation  
Of the new day!**

**\*Meditation\***

**PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: YOUR LOVE  
(inspired by 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13)**

*Posted on The Presbyterian Church in Canada website, <http://presbyterian.ca>. Reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2016/01/prayer-for-others-your-love.html>.*

Your love is patient;  
we give you thanks for all those who have been patient with us  
and have taught and cared for us;  
and we pray for the patience to love others  
as you have loved us.

Your love is kind;  
give us the courage to be kind to others  
and to serve those with patience  
who are so often unkind, rude, difficult to love, or our enemies.  
They are your children and our sisters and brothers  
and they were made in your image.

Your love is not pompous;  
give us insight to speak the truth in love  
and for the sake of your kingdom  
and not out of a need to appear clever or right  
and in all our relationships  
give us the wisdom to listen far more than we speak.

Your love does not seek its own interests;  
we thank you and pray for those who serve the poor and those in need,  
who give tirelessly of themselves and who have much to do  
and little time for themselves.

Your love is not quick-tempered;  
we pray for those who are angry  
and for the violent and their victims;  
for children who fear, elders who are abused,  
and people trapped in relationships that injure and harm.

Your love bears all things;  
we remember before you those with heavy burdens,  
many cares, much stress, and too little comfort and help.  
Open our eyes to those around us and their needs  
and give us the wisdom to offer help  
without any prying or sense of superiority.

Your love never fails;  
even death does not trespass on the breadth and depth of your love.  
We thank you for those we have loved in this life  
and who now dwell in the peace and joy of your presence  
and let your comfort settle on those who are bereaved  
or who are lonely this day.  
In the name of Jesus we pray, Our Father...

## **Departing Hymn #110 “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”**

*Author: Martin Luther*

*Translator: Frederick H Hedge*

*Copyright: Public Domain*

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills, prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth in not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,  
were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing,  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is he; Lord Sabaoth, his name,  
from age to age the same, and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us.  
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure; one little word can fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them abideth;  
the Spirit and the gifts are ours, thru him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;  
the body they may kill; God's truth adideth still; his kingdom is forever.

### **Benediction**

Go now, and wherever people will hear you,  
proclaim the life-changing love of God.  
Do not fear your weakness,  
for when you are weakest, Christ's strength is known.  
Travel lightly, live simply,  
and honour those who welcome the gospel.

In the name of Christ. Amen.