

*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**

**Announcements – Joys/Concerns**

We seem to be always beginning. Or at least we have a tendency to speak about how we start our journey of faith. To some, that seems redundant. “We began long ago,” they might think. And that could be true. Yet, each day is a new beginning, a reaffirmation of the desire to be a disciple of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. So, once again, the journey begins.

Even though there are those of us who are more seasoned travelers on the journey of faith, we are constantly met with new disciples. Rather than being slowed down by this, we are rejuvenated by the zeal that new converts often bring with them. “The journey begins” then is a time of celebration and of hopefulness. We are looking forward to becoming the community that we long to be and are described as being by the very one we follow.

So, here in the late summer and beginning of fall, when some things are winding down and other things are starting up, it is time for us to remember who we are and to whom we pledge our ultimate allegiance. Now is the time we go back to our first love and embrace our God with passion and with joy.

**A Call to Worship**

family of God, as we gather today, Jesus asks us, “Who do you say that I am?”

**You are our Messiah, the Son of the living God!**

Family of God, as we gather today, the Holy Spirit asks us, “Who do you say that I am?”

**You are our Comforter, Advocate, and Sustainer!**

Family of God, as we gather today, God the Father asks us, “Who do you say that I am?”

**You are our Creator, Provider, and Healer!**

Family of God, as we gather today, the Triune God asks us, “Who do you say that I am?”

**You are Love that creates, saves, and enfolds us into the family of God! May we be instruments of Love in all that we are and all that we do.**

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

### **Call to Reconciliation**

While we may yearn to be like Jesus,  
we know that in our hotheaded choices, our frantic lives, our impetuous words,  
we are too often like Peter.

But like him, we can confess Christ as our Lord,  
speaking of our need for your saving presence in our lives.

### **Unison Prayer of Confession**

**We look for you in all the wrong places, God of the lost,  
and wonder why we cannot find you.**

**We wander the corridors of power,  
while you are on the sidewalks, beside the homeless.**

**We sit at the head tables of the world,  
while you are handing out soup to the hungry at the kitchen's backdoor.**

**We applaud those who win the race,  
while you are cheering on those in last place.**

**In forgiving us, God of new life,  
you would transform our cold hearts  
into those melted in service to others.**

**In granting us mercy,  
you challenge us to think of all those we have ignored.**

**In gifting us with grace,  
you enable us to proclaim Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior,  
as the hope, the joy, the peace the world seeks.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

It's not money, but our generosity with it;  
it is not power, but our willingness to humble ourselves;  
it is not our efforts, but Christ's gift,  
which transforms us into God's children.

**It is more than just how we think.**

**In mercy and grace, our hearts, our lives, our spirits  
are transfigured and made new.**

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Praise Hymn UMH #141 "Children of the Heavenly Father"**

**Author:** *Caroline V. Sandell-  
Berg (1855)*

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Augsburg Fortress*

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**1 Children of the heavenly Father  
safely in his bosom gather;  
nestling bird nor star in heaven  
such a refuge e'er was given.**

**2 God his own doth tend and nourish;  
in his holy courts they flourish;  
from all evil things he spares them;  
in his mighty arms he bears them.**

**3 Neither life nor death shall ever  
from the Lord his children sever;  
unto them his grace he showeth,  
and their sorrows all he knoweth.**

**4 Though he giveth or he taketh,  
God his children ne'er forsaketh;  
his the loving purpose solely  
to preserve them pure and holy.**

**Gospel Reading..... Matthew 16:13-20 (NRSV)**

**Peter's Declaration about Jesus**

<sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup> And they said, "Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah,<sup>[a]</sup> the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter,<sup>[b]</sup> and on this rock<sup>[c]</sup> I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup> Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was<sup>[d]</sup> the Messiah.<sup>[e]</sup>

This is the Word of God, for the people of God, **Thanks be to God!**

**Children's Sermon**

**Faith Hymn UMH #568 "Christ for the World We Sing"**

**Author:** [Samuel Wolcott](#) (1869)

**Composer:** [Felice de Giardini](#) (1769)

**1. Christ for the world we sing,  
the world to Christ we bring,  
with loving zeal;  
the poor, and them that mourn,  
the faint and overborne,  
sin-sick and sorrow-worn,  
whom Christ doth heal.**

**2. Christ for the world we sing,  
the world to Christ we bring,  
with fervent prayer;  
the wayward and the lost,**

**by restless passions tossed,  
redeemed at countless cost,  
from dark despair.**

**3. Christ for the world we sing,  
the world to Christ we bring,  
with one accord;  
with us the work to share,  
with us reproach to dare,  
with us the cross to bear,  
for Christ our Lord.**

**4. Christ for the world we sing,  
the world to Christ we bring,  
with joyful song;  
the newborn souls, whose days,  
reclaimed from error's ways,  
inspired with hope and praise,  
to Christ belong.**

### **Message**

#### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God, without you on our side, our troubles would swallow us up whole. Guide us, merciful God, as we navigate through the muck and mire in our lives. Help us to trust your guidance.

**Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

God, without you on our side, disasters would overwhelm and sweep us away. Protect us, merciful God, and inspire us to give and receive help when we face times of calamity and destruction.

**Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

God, without you on our side, the suffering of the world would overtake us, arresting us with the enormity of human need all around us. Help our hearts remain tender, merciful God, that we would meet the suffering in ourselves, our families, and our neighbors with compassion and care.

**Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

God, without you on our side, the conflicts and discord that surround us would leave us full of distrust and suspicion. Heal us, merciful God, that we may be agents of restoration, peace, and help everywhere we go.

**Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Thanks be to God who guides, protects, heals, and helps us now and forevermore.**

In the name of Jesus Christ our savior of mercy, comfort and care, we join together in the prayer he taught us to pray, Our Father...

## **Offertory/Doxology**

### **Offertory Prayer**

*Loving and generous God: As we offer our gifts this day, we confess that when confronted with Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" our answer is ambivalent at best. Even when we get the words right, we know our lives give a different answer. We turn away from the suffering and oppression of your children. We accumulate wealth and prestige and ignore the poor and powerless. You give and hold nothing back, and we give from our excess and resent being asked to do more. Help us to respond with the answer that comes from the center of our being and that is demonstrated in our living. In Christ, we pray. Amen. ([Matthew 16: 13-20](#))*

### **Departing Hymn UMH #670 "Go Forth for God" (verse 1)**

*Author: John R. Peacey*

*Harmonizer: Charles Winfred Douglas*

**Go forth for God, go to the world in peace;  
Be of good courage, armed with heavenly grace,  
In God's good Spirit daily to increase,  
Till in the kingdom we see face to face.  
Go forth for God, go to the world in peace.**

### **SENDING FORTH**

Family of God, go from this place led by the Triune God who loves you, saves you, and sustains you, that in our following, we may be agents of goodness and blessing wherever we go. Amen.

### **Postlude**