

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



*The kingdom of
God is like this.*

Prelude – Welcome - Announcements

Opening Meditation

Today we center our thoughts on growing into the new creation that we are called to be in Christ. We all have stories to help others see what living as a disciple is like. Each one of us here today has a faith testimony.

Think about this - What has it been like to experience God’s love and forgiveness, to have a taste of the kin-dom in your own life? What glimpses of the kin-dom have you seen in your daily life and what ways have you been or experienced the sheltering shade of the branches of faith?

Maybe you are seeking to find the answer to these questions. Maybe you are in the process of learning and growing Christ. Maybe you have spent your entire life wrestling with these questions. Whether you find yourselves at the beginning of the path to Christ, somewhere in the middle or at the last miles at this moment, you have a story to tell. Our own stories of growth into the new creation are the means and nourishment for others. Our testimonies offer invitations and supply opportunities of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Today we celebrate the new creation that we have become in Christ and we encourage each other in continued growth on the path of discipleship. John Wesley called this sanctification, where we are made by the activity of the Spirit within and among us into something that more resembles the Christ we follow. It is a long and often difficult process, full of as many setbacks as advances. Yet we forge on in joy, knowing that we are the body of the Christ we serve.

A Call to Worship

Who is my mother, and who are my brothers and sisters? Look around you and you will see them. They are not always the people you grew up with. They are the people who have joined the journey to learn more about God and the ways of God’s people.

They are the people who abandon houses and land, fame, and fortune -- for the sake of the gospel.

They are the people who pray through the night for the safety of someone else’s child or for the healing of someone else’s loved one.

They are the ones who offer a cold cup of water to people considered outcast. They do so in the name of Christ.

Who are my brothers; who are my sisters; where is my family?

Jesus said that: Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.

Welcome to worship, family!

We gather to worship the God who has made us kin!

Opening Prayer

All-knowing God, You embrace all that we are and all that we will be.

Help us to truly see one another, so that we can see your light in one another as well as our diverse needs. Help us to listen deeply to one another, so that we can eagerly respond to your call to advocate for justice, inclusion, and peace. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Praise Hymn #694 Come Ye Thankful People Come

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**Come, ye thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest home;
all is safely gathered in,
ere the winter storms begin.
God our Maker doth provide
for our wants to be supplied;
come to God's own temple, come,
raise the song of harvest home.**

**All the world is God's own field,
fruit as praise to God we yield;
wheat and tares together sown
are to joy or sorrow grown;
first the blade and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear;
Lord of harvest, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.**

**For the Lord our God shall come,
and shall take the harvest home;
from the field shall in that day
all offenses purge away,
giving angels charge at last
in the fire the tares to cast;
but the fruitful ears to store
in the garner evermore.**

**Even so, Lord, quickly come,
bring thy final harvest home;
gather thou thy people in,**

**free from sorrow, free from sin,
there, forever purified,
in thy presence to abide;
come, with all thine angels, come,
raise the glorious harvest home.**

We Hear God's Word

Gospel Reading..... Mark 4:26-34 (NRSV)

The Parable of the Growing Seed

26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground,
27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does
not know how. 28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full
grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle,
because the harvest has come."

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

30 He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we
use for it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest
of all the seeds on earth; 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of
all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its
shade."

The Use of Parables

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; 34
he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his
disciples.

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

Children's Message

Faith Hymn #2196 We Walk by Faith

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**We walk by faith, and not by sight;
no gracious words we hear
of him who spoke as none e'er spoke,
but we believe him near.**

**We may not touch his hands and side,
nor follow where he trod,
yet in his promise we rejoice,
and cry, "My Lord and God!"**

**Help then, O Lord, our unbelief,
and may our faith abound
to call on you when you are near,
and seek where you are found:**

**That when our life of faith is done,
in realms of clearer light
we may behold you as you are
in full and endless sight.**

**We walk by faith, and not by sight;
no gracious words we hear
of him who spoke as none e'er spoke,
but we believe him near.**

***Message ***

Joys/Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Holy One you anoint us with living water, so we may go to serve the world in these troubled days. You open our eyes so we will see everyone as our sisters and brothers.

Seed Planter you place faith deep within us, so we can bear witness to your just and loving kingdom. Your love regulates our hearts, so we can welcome all in your name.

Gentle Spirit when we cannot see the way, you take us by the hand so we can step forward, in faith, into the kingdom. You fill us with hope, so we can sing God's joy all of our days.

Loving creator we come to you this day raising those we have named to you. May your hands of love, presence of strength and grace be with them.

God in Community, Holy in One, hear us as we pray as Jesus has taught us, Our Father...

Offertory/Doxology/Prayer

Lord of all bounty and blessing, the gifts we offer to you are like seeds. Some will take root nearby, and we will see them grow and bear fruit. Some will be carried far beyond where we can see, and we have faith that they will find good soil and thrive. We thank you for the privilege of being called to sow. Bless with the joy of good fruit the seed we will see and the seed we will never see. We pray this in the loving name of Jesus, gardener and savior. Amen. (Mark 4:26-34)

Departing Hymn #540 I Love Thy Kingdom Lord

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**I love thy kingdom, Lord, the house of thine abode,
the church our blest Redeemer saved with his own precious blood.**

**I love thy church, O God! Her walls before thee stand
dear as the apple of thine eye and graven on they hand.**

**For her my tears shall fall, for her my prayers ascend,
to her my cares and toils be given, till toils and cares shall end.**

**Beyond my highest joy I prize her heavenly ways,
her sweet communion, solemn vows, her hymns of love and praise.**

**Sure as thy truth shall last, to Zion shall be given
the brightest glories earth can yield and brighter bliss of heaven.**

BENEDICTION: God of transforming grace, we give you thanks for how you continually and faithfully work your redemption within each of us. Empower us this week not to be afraid or ashamed to share the life-altering encounter with your amazing grace in ways that are attractive and influential to others. Amen.