



PANTHER VALLEY ECUMENICAL CHURCH

5th Sunday of Lent

March 21, 2021

*Connecting with the Community,
Growing Disciples, and Serving Jesus Christ*

*Our Worship can be viewed on our website
PantherValleyChurch.org*

FRIENDS ~ FAMILY ~ FAITH

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

Lord God, Maker of heaven and earth, we gather together in Your name.

We come to offer You our worship and thanksgiving, our praise and our prayers.

Come among us, living Lord. Through the power of Your Holy Spirit, transform our hearts and minds so that we may recognize Your presence, hear Your voice, know Your will, and walk in Your way.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

So many voices, so many signs, so many choices and opinions all promising wisdom and the life it brings.

It's tempting to listen, tempting to try these well-marketed principles especially now, when so much is at stake.

But, then I remember, wisdom is not an idea, not a method or technique, not a formula to buy or sell. It's much simpler, and much more difficult than that, for it requires the unpredictable, the time-consuming, the vulnerable work of relationship with you, God.

So, here I am, to lose myself in you again, and to let your wisdom find me. Amen.

HYMN *O Love That Will Not Let Me Go*

SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 12:2-12

New Revised Standard Version

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

GOSPEL OF JOHN 8:12

Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

MESSAGE *The Welcoming Prayer*

SPECIAL MUSIC *In Christ Alone*

Prayer for Peace

Great God, who has told us
"Vengeance is mine,"
save us from ourselves,
save us from the vengeance in our hearts
and the acid in our souls.

Save us from our desire to hurt as we have been hurt,
to punish as we have been punished,
to terrorize as we have been terrorized.

Give us the strength it takes
to listen rather than to judge,
to trust rather than to fear,
to try again and again
to make peace even when peace eludes us.

We ask, O God, for the grace
to be our best selves.
We ask for the vision
to be builders of the human community
rather than its destroyers.
We ask for the humility as a people
to understand the fears and hopes of other peoples.

We ask for the love it takes
to bequeath to the children of the world to come
more than the failures of our own making.
We ask for the heart it takes
to care for all the peoples
as well as for ourselves.

Give us the depth of soul, O God,
to constrain our might,
to resist the temptations of power
to refuse to attack the attackable,
to understand
that vengeance begets violence,
and to bring peace--not war--wherever we go.

For You, O God, have been merciful to us.
For You, O God, have been patient with us.
For You, O God, have been gracious to us.

And so may we be merciful
and patient

and gracious
and trusting
with these others whom you also love.

This we ask through Jesus,
the one without vengeance in his heart.
This we ask forever and ever. Amen

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Gracious God,
You are a God of hospitality;
there is none like you that invites all to come to you.
You have invited all to your home, to your table, and to your arms.
Lord, would that all would hear and receive this good news.
Lord, help us to remember that no one is better than anyone else in your Kingdom.
Help us to then treat each other the way you treat people.

Generous God,
Because you treat us with your tender love,
We take time to pray for our friends, family members
and others who need you more than ever.
(pause and lift up each name)

Pour out your healing on all who need it.
Be generous with your transforming love
for those who needs it in their lives.
Bring forth your reconciliation in families,
and in places where it is needed.

Gifting God,
You give us the gifts of the spirit to use to further your Kingdom
and to be the Body of Christ in the world.
We take time to remember the people devastated the violent murders in Atlanta.
Let us name how these murders are rooted in racism, white supremecay, a history of misogyny and
stereotyping directed at Asian women.
Empower us to continue to be your hands and feet
to continue the work that needs to be done to confront the roots of racism and xenophobia in our
midst, and even in ourselves.

There is none like you God in your love, your generosity,
your gifting and your hospitality.
And we thank you that you are in our lives,
working in us and through us
to let people know your kingdom is open to all.
In the name of your Son, who opened the doors for all
and broke down barriers that kept people from you,
and taught us to pray:

LORD'S 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

PRAYER FOR THE OFFERING

In deep gratitude for all that You have done for us,
we offer ourselves and our gifts to You—
living sacrifices of worship and praise.
Transform our hearts and minds from the inside out;
show us what is good and pleasing in Your sight,
so that we may be quick to recognize Your call,
and quick to respond.
In the name of Jesus, our Messiah and Lord,
Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now as you move on into the world...
Hold that which is happening on the outside AND the inside dear.
Love what comes across your path for what it will teach you.
Cherish the struggle that stirs in your gut for how it will guide you.
And know that all people carry within them
the Essence of the Divine—a Holy Wisdom—given at birth.
Listen every day until we meet again.
Get quiet enough to hear the still small voice and to find your own.
And may the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with you all.

POSTLUDE

Credits:

Today's Liturgy is adapted from: Prayer of Confession, John van de Laar. Prayer for Peace, Sister Joan Chittister, Benedictine Sister of Erie. Posted on World Prayers. Prayer of Intercession inspired by; Rev Abi, and posted on <http://vicarofwadley.blogspot.ca/>

Prelude, Jesus Paid it All, CCLI #3055872, Public Domain
Postlude, Amazing Grace, CCLI#22025, Public Domain
Hymn, O Love That Will Not Let Me Go, Public Domain
Special Music, In Christ Alone, CCLI #3350395, 2001 Thankyou Music

The Welcome Prayer, The Work of the People

Photos, Crocuses, Cody Fitzgerald, Door with Shadows, Donald Gianatti, Palms, Duane Mendes; all from Unsplash

We are grateful for the following people who made this worship service possible:

Diane Van Dongen our Music Director, Carol Phillips our Liturgist, and Pastor Ninabeth Metcalf.