

## Fifth Sunday of Easter

April 28, 2024



### We Gather in Response to God's Invitation

#### THE GIFT OF MUSIC TO GATHER US

*All music and/or lyrics reprinted in the Sunday bulletin and performed during live-streamed worship services are done with permission, CCLI License #1414709.*

*Some of this liturgy is from Much Fruit: Liturgical Resources for the Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B, and PAAM Sunday, was written by the Rev. Mitchell Young, pastor of Montebello Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC in Montebello, CA.*

#### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

##### \*CALL TO WORSHIP (RESPONSIVE)

*One:* Easter people, we have been saved by the Risen Christ, the life-giving Vine.

*All:* **We abide in Love, the life-giving Vine.**

We are branches of the Vine—sustained, nurtured, and pruned by Love.

**We have no life apart from Love, the life-giving Vine.**

When we make our home in the Vine, and the Vine makes a home in us, we bear the fruit of Love.

**We produce the fruit of Love, the life-giving Vine.**

Easter people, how shall we bear the fruit of Love, the life-giving Vine?

**We will love and learn to love as we rest, play, work, and build community with God and one another. Amen.**

##### \*OPENING PRAYER (TOGETHER)

**God of love, plant us in the soil of your grace.**

**Nurture us with the strength of Christ, the vine of everlasting life. Enlighten us with the wisdom of your Spirit, which flows through us today and all days. Abide in us, that we may abide in you and live in your love. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.**

##### \*SINGING TOGETHER:

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” Black #43

**Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, on earth be found,**

**Fix in us a humble dwelling, all your faithful mercies crown;**

**Jesus, you are all compassion; pure, unbounded love impart.**

**Visit us with your salvation, enter every trembling heart.**

**Breathe, O breathe your loving Spirit into every troubled breast;**

**Let us all in you inherit, let us find your promised rest;**

**Take away our love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be;**

**End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.**

**Come, Almighty, to deliver, let us all your life receive;**

**Suddenly return, and never, nevermore your temples leave.**

**You we would be always blessing, love you as your angels love,**

**Pray and praise for your unfailing, wounded arms outstretched above.**

**Finish, then, your new creation; pure and spotless may we prove;**

**Let us see your great salvation perfectly restored in you;**

**Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,**

**Crowned as saints, we ever shall be lost in wonder, love, and praise.**

### We Pray for Transformation and New Life

#### INTRODUCTION

We thank you, gracious God, for Jesus Christ the true vine, with his roots eternally grounded in you. We rejoice that by grace we have been grafted into him, to be branches on a vine which bears the loveliest of all the fruits of earth. Yet we confess that all is not well with the way we live.

#### PRAYER OF CONFESSION (TOGETHER)

**Please forgive us for the occasions when we have been the ones to introduce disease into the vine, preferring its contamination to the vigor of health.**

Forgive us for neglecting to draw deeply on the sap of Life, for our tendency to wander instead of growing on the trellis you provide, for being content, and sometimes even proud of, a few sparse or undersized fruits, for the apathy which lets us to go through some seasons without bearing any fruit.

Forgive us for the times we have assumed your role as Holy Vine Grower: we have judged other branches as unworthy to be connected to us and we have tried to prune them off the True Vine saying, "You don't belong; you don't produce fruit; you don't produce the right kind of fruit; your fruit smells funny; you belong in the compost heap."

Have mercy on us. Please do not lose patience or sever us completely from the true vine. Rather heal our diseases, train our wandering tendrils, prune our unfruitful branches and cut away our diseased ones. May we remain in you and you in us, through all the changing seasons of life. Let us delight in bearing the fruits of love which are our true purpose and joy for your Name's sake.

*Time for silent reflection.*

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS (RESPONSIVE)

Christ is the vine. We are simply branches. If we abide in Christ, Christ's words will abide in us. Ask for whatever you wish in Christ's name, and it will be granted. In the name of Christ, you who seek forgiveness are forgiven!

**In the name of Christ, you who seek forgiveness are forgiven!**

\*PASSING OF THE PEACE

*(As a sign of our deep fellowship and communion with God and with one another, let us personally greet one another with a handshake or peace sign and bless one another with the peace that comes from being in Christ.)*

Because we trust in the grace and peace of Christ let us share it.

The peace of Christ be with you!

**And also with you!**

Let us share the peace of Christ with one another.

\*SUNG RESPONSE

"Grateful"

Sing! #143 refrain

**Grateful for the life you give us, thankful for your Holy One,  
joyful in your Spirit flowing over all, O God of Love.**

**Grateful for the Bread of Heaven, thankful for your Holy Word,**

**joyful in your mercy flowering, we will praise you.**

**We Listen for God's Word**

MINISTRY THROUGH MUSIC

"Where Hope Began"

arr. Parker/Lantz

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Loving and life-giving God, through your only Son you overcame death and opened to us the light of your everlasting love for us. Enlighten our minds and kindle our hearts with the presence of your Spirit, that we may hear your words of comfort and challenge in the reading of the scriptures, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

RESPONSIVE PSALTER READING

PSALM 22:25-31

*Having recovered from a terrible illness, a time of feeling abandoned, the psalmist praises God.*

From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

**The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever!**

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.

**For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.**

To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.

**Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord,**

and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

LETTER READING:

1 JOHN 7-21 7

*God is the source of love. God's Spirit of love abides in us.*

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. <sup>13</sup> By this we

know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. <sup>16</sup> So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. <sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. <sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup> Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup> The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

GOSPEL READING

JOHN 15:1-8

*In this part of his farewell speech, Jesus urges his followers to stay connected with him, so they can reproduce his ministry. Hear the Good News*

<sup>11</sup> "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>12</sup> He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>13</sup> You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>14</sup> Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>15</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>16</sup> Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>17</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>18</sup> My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

May these words of scripture speak life into your spirit.

**Thanks be to God.**

MEDITATION:

"Bearing Fruit"

Pastor Dave

SINGING TOGETHER

"O God in Whom All Life Begins"

Black #401

**O God in whom all life begins, who births the seed to fruit,  
bestow your blessing on our lives; here let your love find root.  
Bring forth in us the Spirit's gifts of patience, joy, and peace;  
deliver us from numbing fear, and grant our faith increase.**

**Unite in mutual ministry our minds and hands and hearts**

**that we may have the grace to seek the power your peace imparts.**

**So let our varied gifts combine to glorify your Name**

**that in all things by word and deed we may your love proclaim.**

**Through tears and laughter, grief and joy, enlarge our trust and care;**

**so bind us in community that we may risk and dare.**

**Be with us when we gather here to worship, sing, and pray,**

**then send us forth in power and faith to live the words we say.**

**We Respond to God's Word**

A "TRUE VINE" LITANY

When we remember the family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and strangers, who nurture us, that the love of God may grow within, may we trust that we are part of the vine rooted in God's heart of love, and remember that Jesus said,

**"I am the True Vine; abide in me."**

When we feel isolated, let us remember that Jesus said,

**"I am the True Vine; abide in me."**

When we feel powerless, let us find strength in remembering that Jesus said,

**"I am the True Vine; abide in me."**

When we are tempted to try to go it alone, let us reach out to other faithful people, remembering that Jesus said,

**"I am the True Vine; abide in me."**

When we suffer from any illness or disease of mind, body, or spirit—let us find greater wholeness in remembering that Jesus said,

**"I am the True Vine; abide in me."**

When we are grieving, may we experience God's comforting love and solace as we remember that Jesus said,

**"I am the True Vine; abide in me."**

When we experience injustice, let us remember that Jesus said,

**"I am the True Vine; abide in me."**

When life becomes so busy that time with God seems impossible to find, let us regain our focus by turning our hearts and minds to the one who said,

**"I am the True Vine; abide in me."**

When we stress about the quality of the fruit we are or are not producing, let us relax and trust the source of our life and growth, the One who said,

**"I am the True Vine; abide in me."**

#### A TIME FOR PRAYER

##### SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

*You are invited to share joys and concerns we can pray for together. Let our sharing itself be an act of prayer.*

##### PRAYERS ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE

##### THE PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

**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 sin 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.**

#### ENCOURAGEMENT TO SHARING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

*You are invited to place your gifts in the offering basket as you arrive or depart from our worship together.*

We praise God by sharing the abundant fruit of God's love with our siblings throughout the world, so that every empty bowl may be filled with enough rice, every empty plate covered with enough tortillas, every empty stomach satisfied with enough taro. Let us live in God's love so that our joy may be complete.

##### DEDICATING OUR OFFERING (TOGETHER)

**Dear God, Holy Vine Grower, you are love. May the offerings we share today be a source of hope for the poor. Help us to live out your commandment to love others, not just because we reach out to them as our siblings, but also because as siblings, *they* reach out to *us* as well. Amen.**

### We Go Out to Serve

#### \*SINGING TOGETHER

"Fruitful Trees"

Tune: GALILEE

*Timothy Dudley-Smith. Copyright © 1984 Hope Publishing Co.*

**Fruitful trees, the Spirit's sowing, May we ripen and increase,  
Fruit to life eternal growing, Rich in love and joy and peace.**

**Laden branches freely bearing Gifts the Giver loves to bless;  
Here is fruit that grows by sharing, Patience, kindness, gentleness.**

**Rooted deep in Christ our Master, Christ our pattern and our goal,  
Teach us, as the years fly faster, Goodness, faith, and self-control.**

**Fruitful trees, the Spirit's tending, May we grow till harvests cease;  
Till we taste, in life unending, Heaven's love and joy and peace.**

#### \*GOOD WORDS FOR GOING FORTH

We love because God first loved us. So you Branches of the Vine, go from this place blessed by Love to work in love with your family, your friends, your neighbors, and strangers who will become friends, bearing the fruit of the life-giving Vine as you cultivate abundant life wherever you go.

And may God the vine grower tend you and make you fruitful;

May Christ Jesus abide in you and give you life;

And may the Holy Spirit cast out all fear and fill you with God's love. Amen.

#### \*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

"Peace I Leave with You, My Friends"

Black #249 refrain

**Peace I leave with you, my friends, shalom, my peace, in all you do. Peace I leave with you, my friends. I give to you so you can give to others, too.**

#### TAKE WITH YOU GOD'S GIFT OF MUSIC

#### WE RETURN TO THE WORLD RENEWED AND EMPOWERED BY GOD'S SPIRIT

As our worship ends, our service begins.