

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 18, 2025



Cerezo Barredo, "En la Cena ecológica del Reino" ("At the Ecological Dinner in the Kingdom")

We Gather in Response to God's Invitation

THE GIFT OF MUSIC TO GATHER US

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AFFIRMATION OF MISSION

We declare ourselves to be a Christ-centered Open and Affirming Congregation, welcoming persons into full membership and participation in the Body of Christ regardless of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions, ability, culture, economic status, ethnicity, or family composition.

We recognize that there are differences among us, but believe that we can love alike even though we may not think alike. We proclaim this covenant of welcome to all who have known the pain of exclusion or discrimination in church and society. We invite all people to join us in our faith journey toward greater love, understanding, and mutual respect.

*CALL TO WORSHIP (*RESPONSIVE*)

**An asterisk indicates when the people stand in body or spirit.*

One: We gather in the name of the living Christ to worship God.

All: **Surely, God is in this place and calls us to worship in spirit and in truth.**

God's love is for you and for all people everywhere.

That we may share God's love and life, may we be renewed in the refreshing Spirit of the living Christ.

The living Christ is with us.

Praise God!

*OPENING PRAYER (*TOGETHER*)

Most gracious God, as we continue to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, we pray that we may be bound together in Christian love and that our faith and fellowship may be a witness through which your spirit will grow your realm of love, justice, and peace. We humbly thank you for your many blessings you have given us. We ask that we may learn how to truly be Easter people who love as you love us. Amen.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

SINGING TOGETHER

"God Is Truly with Us"

Black #68

God is truly with us; sing we and adore now:

praise the One we come before now.

Here within this temple, here in sound and silence,

worship God in deepest reverence.

You alone, God, we own, you, our God and Savior; praise to you forever.

God is truly with us; loud our praise resounding!

Echoes of the saints surrounding! "Holy, holy, holy,"

hear the hymn ascending, angels, saints, their voices blending!

Bow your ear to us here; hear, O Christ, the praises that your Church now raises.

Source of every blessing, bless the ones who name you,

let our words and deeds proclaim you.

Like the saints and angels praising you in glory,

may your servants sing your story.

And in all, great and small, may we do most nearly

what you love and more dearly.

We Pray for Transformation and New Life

INTRODUCTION

We show others who we are by the lives we lead, the words we speak, the actions we undertake. Let us confess how we have not been God's little children, when we fail to love as we have been loved.

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE (*TOGETHER*)

Who are we to get in your way, Holy God? We put people into neat, little boxes, but you rip them open, so folks can dance in your joy. We imprison others with our unmet expectations, and you set them free with a Word. We build walls around those we don't know, and you tear them down, so they can run wild in the kingdom.

Who are we to get in your way, Saving Power, especially in the way of your forgiveness offered to all! Give us your vision that sees everyone as equal - forgiven, graced, loved - even as we seek to follow our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Silence is kept

WORDS OF GRACE (*RESPONSIVE*)

We know who God is by the love shown to us in Christ Jesus.

We will show others who we are - and Whose we are - by the loved poured out by our lives. Thanks be to God, we are forgiven! Amen

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*PASSING OF THE PEACE

As Peter gave his hand to the family of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, in prayer and witness and baptism, so Christ extends a loving hand to us.

The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you!

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

SUNG RESPONSE

“He Lives”

Brown #299, vs 1

I serve a risen Savior, He’s in the world today; I know that He is living, whatever men may say; I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer, And just the time I need Him He’s always near.

Refrain: **He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way. He lives, He lives, salvation to impart! You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.**

We Hear God’s Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Gracious and loving God, through your only Son you overcame death and opened to us the light of eternal and abundant life. 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.

ACTS READING: ACTS 11:1-18

Today we are hearing a story about Peter meeting with Jewish Christian leaders in Jerusalem to talk about when Peter went to Cornelius’ house. Peter was a Jew. Cornelius was a Gentile. Jews did not like or trust Gentiles. Because Gentiles would eat foods that Jews would not, Jews would not eat with Gentiles or even drink from a cup that a Gentile had used. Knowing that, listen to what happened between Peter and Cornelius and Peter and the Jewish Christian leaders.

Now the apostles and the brothers and sisters who were in Judea heard that the gentiles had also accepted the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, ³ saying, “Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?” ⁴ Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, ⁵ “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners, and it came close to me. ⁶ As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. ⁷ I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ ⁸ But I replied, ‘By no means, Lord, for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹ But a second time the voice answered from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane.’ ¹⁰ This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. ¹¹ At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house

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where we were. ¹²The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; ¹⁴he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' ¹⁵And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" ¹⁸When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

GOSPEL READING

JOHN 13:31-35

On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus gives his followers a new commandment. Hear the Good News.

³¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The word of God for the people of God.

God is still speaking. Thanks be to God!

MEDITATION:

"Commanded to Love?"

Pastor Dave

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.**

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

**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 Respond to God's Word

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: CENTERING PRAYER

Take a moment to choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to open to God's resurrecting presence and action within. You could use words like: love, glory, enfleshed, embody, freedom, liberation.

Take a few deep breaths and let your bodymindspirit settle into prayer. In the silence, call to mind the sacred word you chose. If other thoughts interrupt, return gently to your sacred word. Notice what the Holy Spirit may be offering you in this moment.

[Hold silence for 2-3 minutes]

With gratitude for the presence of God's resurrecting spirit in and among us, and acting through us, we offer our prayers. Amen.

A TIME FOR COMMUNAL 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.

When Jesus said, just as I have loved you, you should also love one another, perhaps he meant: Love like twelve years of bleeding stopped by one touch; Love like let the one who is without sin, cast the first stone; Love like let the children come to me; Love like 5,000 people fed by bits and pieces and collective care; Love like tables turned and injustice resisted; Love like feet washed and meals shared. This is the love we are called to continue embodying in our world. Through our offerings, let us love as Jesus loves us.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

DEDICATING OUR OFFERING (*TOGETHER*)

**Let Love be our offering. Let Love be our giving. Let Love be our dedication.
Let Love be our calling. Let Love be our thanksgiving. Let Love be our prayer.
Amen.**

We Come to the Lord's Table

MINISTRY THROUGH MUSIC

"Be With Us Now, O Lord"

J. Althouse

THE INVITATION

Beloved in Christ, the gospel of Luke tells us that on the first day of the week Jesus Christ was raised from death, and on that same day appeared to two of the disciples, sat at the table with them and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is the joyful feast of the people of God. Men and women, youth and elderly come from the east and the west, the north and the south and gather to Christ's table.

This table is for all Christians who wish to receive the presence of Christ and share in the community of God's people.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

May God be with you.

And also with you.

Little children, lift your hearts to God.

We lift them to the One who loves us forever.

Let us glorify the One who has raised Jesus to new life.

We sing praises to God, who makes all things new.

THE COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us sing.

(sing) Fairest Lord Jesus! Ruler of all nature! O thou of God and man the Son!

Thee will I cherish, thee will I honor, thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown!

How can we stop from praising you, for your mercy and love are beyond our comprehension. In the beginning, you created a beautiful universe where all things had their place and order. You infused it with your Spirit, and breathed life into all creatures. You made humankind in your own image, and though we often stray from you, you continually call us out of darkness into your light.

You call us to yourself, giving us leaders, prophets, priests and kings to create a holy nation. At the right time, you entered into our reality with the gift of Jesus, and have opened forever the doors to eternal life, inviting all your children to enter into the wonder of Christ's resurrection.

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

You unite us in a common humanity, declaring that there are no barriers to communion with you. You break down all the walls that divide, and invite us to share in the joy of salvation.

(sing) Crown him with many crowns, the lamb upon his throne; hark how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own; awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee, and hail him as thy matchless king through all eternity.

THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Recall that on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying, "This is my body, given for you. Eat this in remembrance of me."

Then after the supper, again giving thanks, he took the cup saying, "Drink of this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For as often as we eat this bread and drink from this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Send now, we pray, your Holy Spirit the spirit of our Lord and of his resurrection, that we now receive the Lord's body and blood may live by your love commandment to the praise of your glory and receive our inheritance with all your saints in light. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Let us pray:

We give thanks, God, because in your own free gift of love you have reached out to us. You have refreshed us at your table, touched our deepest needs, and called us to a life shared in memory and hope. Send us forth with courage and joy in the name of Jesus Christ, that we, too, may become bread and peace for one another and the world. Amen.

We Go Out to Serve

*SINGING TOGETHER

"There's Bread for the Journey" Sing! #210

There's bread for the journey and friends for the way.

There's hope for tomorrow and love for today.

**The cup of forgiveness, all blessings release,
to heal and renew us and bring us God's peace.**

O Holy Spirit, bind us together now.

O Holy Spirit, bring us your peace. (repeat)

Because of who YOU are and where YOU are on life's journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

There's bread for the journey and friends for the way.
There's hope for tomorrow and love for today.
The cup of forgiveness, all blessings release,
to heal and renew us and bring us God's peace.

O Holy Spirit, bind us together now.
O Holy Spirit, bring us your peace. *(repeat)*

*GOOD WORDS FOR GOING FORTH

People of God, God who is love, as you go from this place, let love be what blesses you, love that is not nice or polite, but knows how to sing in the midst of despair, how to rise up in the midst of death, how to hold fast in the midst of chaos. Let love be the blessing you share, love that is not merely tolerant or charitable, but knows how to care when all seems hopeless, how to listen when others are silenced, how to come alongside when no one else will. People of Love, let love be your blessing, this day and every day until glory comes. Amen.

*SINGING TOGETHER

"Halleluja"

Black #236

Halle, halle, halleluja. Halle, halle, halleluja. Halle, halle, halleluja. Halleluja, halleluja.

TAKE WITH YOU GOD'S GIFT OF MUSIC

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

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"Building Up a New World – Looking for Love" Service Prayers for Easter 5C was written by Dr. Sharon R. Fennema, who serves as Join the Movement toward Racial Justice Curator with UCC National Ministries.

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