

St Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor
Order of Worship for the Sunday following Ascension Day
May 16, 2021

(Although we are now holding worship in our building, we are conscious of the ongoing challenge of in-person worship while the coronavirus persists, and the need many feel to avoid the possibility of contagion. Therefore, we will be continuing the practice of sending a worship bulletin to all who are on our mailing lists for email or hard copy. Those who will be worshipping from home and who have computer access will also be receiving a recorded version of the service that will be sent out by email on Sunday afternoon and also can be seen on our Facebook page. We welcome your participation in any way that is convenient for you, and we encourage you to share our worship service with any person you know who may appreciate receiving it.)

Welcome, Announcements and Prayer Concerns

Prelude (recording begins)

Opening Declaration: Psalm 93:4-5 (responsive)

*More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea,
majestic on high is the Lord!
Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.*

***Hymn**

“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name!”

#106

*All hail the power of Jesus’ name! Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all;
bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all.*

*Ye chosen seed of Israel’s race, ye ransomed from the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace, and crown him Lord of all;
hail him who saves you by his grace, and crown him Lord of all.*

*Let every kindred, every tribe on this terrestrial ball,
To him all majesty ascribe, and crown him Lord of all;
to him all majesty ascribe, and crown him Lord of all.*

*O that with yonder sacred throng we at his feet may fall!
We’ll join the everlasting song, and crown him Lord of all;
we’ll join the everlasting song, and crown him Lord of all.*

Opening Prayer (unison)

Today, O God, we celebrate the Holy Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came among us as an ordinary person, but by extraordinary revelation of all that among us is true and good, came to be known among us as the Holy One whose life is a light on the pathway to you. We affirm that his teachings, his life and his sacrifice elevate our vision and enlighten the eyes of our hearts to see the essential nature of your love. Today, we come to recommit ourselves to the Way of Christ that calls to us from your heavenly realm and leads us to you. Amen.

Epistle Lesson: Ephesians 1:15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

*Hymn

“A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing!”

#322

*A hymn of glory let us sing! New hymns throughout the world shall ring:
Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*Christ, by a road before untrod, ascends unto the throne of God.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*The holy apostolic band upon the Mount of Olives stand.
Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*And with his faithful followers see their Lord ascend in majesty!
Alleluia! ... Alleluia!*

*O Lord, our homeward pathway bend that our unwearied hearts ascend.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Where, seated on the heavenly throne, you reign in Majesty alone.
Alleluia! ... Alleluia!*

***O risen Christ, ascended Lord, all praise to you let earth accord:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
You are, while endless ages run, with Father and with Spirit one.
Alleluia! ... Alleluia!***

Gospel Lesson:

Acts 1:1-11

*In the first book, O Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."
So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."*

Sermon

Pastor Allen

The Festival of the Ascension is the celebration in the church that signifies our faith that the life and teachings of Jesus have revealed to us the essential nature of the God we worship – that we do not just remember who Jesus was, but we celebrate who Jesus is each day for us as we contemplate the eternal truths expressed in his life of sacrificial love. The message of the Ascension is that this love is truly divine, and the One who shared it with us now lives in the heart of God.

Musical Interlude

Jake Rizer

Pastoral Prayer

Holy God, we rejoice today in the in the spirit of love that is in the center of your heart – the sacrificial love of Jesus that gives assurance to our souls and makes us aware of our own capacity to bring good news to others in your name. May the ascended Christ be conscious within us as we seek to live according to your way.

We lay before you the burdens of our lives – the moments when we have failed to be Christ-like in our generosity, welcoming to all, or courageous in our advocacy for another’s rights and welfare, or when we have been tempted to find hostile or violent solutions to hard times. We pray for courage in the times when living by your way seems burdensome to us and we are tempted to conform to the interests of the world against the teachings of our faith.

May the guidance of the living Christ continue to animate our better nature, and may we live for the privilege of loving as Christ loves. May the fellowship of our congregation here provide a model of the way of Christ, as we learn to listen to one another, forgive one another’s weaknesses and celebrate one another’s strengths and gifts. And may we work together all our days for the coming of your heavenly realm in all the communities and nations of the earth.

Dear God, we lift up before you all those in our fellowship who are sick, recovering from surgery or illness, bereaved, disappointed or lonely. May we be sensitive to the needs around us, and responsive as the stewards of your grace. We also pray for those who suffer the many calamities of our world – the displaced, the impoverished, the oppressed, the misunderstood; and we pray for wisdom, insight and compassion among all those who hold power and influence in our world, to seek the justice for those in need that is the public expression of your love.

As Jesus has taught us, so we 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors,

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

***Closing Hymn**

“O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing”

#96

***O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise,
the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace.***

***My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,
To spread thro’ all the earth abroad the honors of your name.***

*Jesus! The name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease,
'tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life and health and peace.*

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin, he sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean, his blood availed for me.*

*To God all glory, praise and love be now and ever given
by saints below and saints above, the Church in earth and heaven.*

***Benediction**

*Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.*

Postlude