

Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor
Order of Worship for Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 22, 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)

Call to Worship: Psalm 84:1-4

*How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;
My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.
Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my ruler and my God.
Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.*

***Hymn**

"I Love Your Kingdom, Lord"

#549 blue hymnal

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

*I love your Church, O God – her walls before you stand,
Dear as the apple of your eye, and graven on your 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 your truth shall last, to Zion shall be given
The brightest glories earth can yield, and brighter bliss of heaven.*

Opening Prayer

We gather this morning, God, in the house of praise that we have made for you. We know that you do not live within these walls, but we celebrate your presence here in the midst of the congregation that gathers in your name. May this place where we have worshipped you for many generations remind us of all who have searched for you here and found in one another's expressions of love and faith a guidepost to the truth that guides our journey day by day. Amen.

*Hymn

"Gather Us In"

#649 blue hymnal

*Here in this place, the new light is streaming, shadows of doubt are vanished away.
See in this space our fears and our dreamings, brought here to you in the light of the day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken, gather us in, our spirits aflame.
Call to us now, and we shall awaken; we shall arise at the sound of our name.*

*We are the young. Our lives are a mystery; we are the old, who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history, called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty; gather us in, the proud and the strong;
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly; give us the courage to enter the song.*

*Here we receive new life in the waters; here we receive the bread of new birth;
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters, call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion; give us to eat the bread that is you;
Nourish us well, and teach us to fashion lives that are holy and hearts that are true.*

*Not just in buildings, small and confining, not in some heaven light years away,
Here in this place the new light is shining; now is God present, and now is the day,
Gather us in and hold us forever; gather us in and make us your own;
Gather us in, all peoples together, fire of love in our flesh and our bone.*

Epistle Reading: Ephesians 6:10-20

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures: 1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. He said, "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on the earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand. Therefore, O Lord, God of Israel, keep for your servant my father David that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' Therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed which you promised to your servant my father David.

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive....

"Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name – for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm – when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built".

Sermon: "A House of Prayer for all People"

We remember the story about how Jesus entered the temple in Jerusalem and turned over the tables of the moneychangers. He said, "This is a house of prayer for all people, and you have turned it into a den of thieves." This message spoken by Jesus, which may have been the one that caused him to be tried and crucified, was rooted in the long-ago prayer of King Solomon, who built the first temple and invited through his prayer both those who were Israelites and those from other nations to come and offer their prayers to God. So also should our houses of worship be places where God receives the prayers of all nationalities and races.

Musical Interlude

Jake Rizer

Pastoral Prayer

God of all peoples and nations, we call to you from this house of prayer, asking that we may be faithful to our calling to make this a place of hospitality for all. As we lift up our own prayers before you, may we have in mind the prayers of many others throughout the world. May we

recognize that those who seek you come from many different backgrounds, religious practices, and needs. As we hear the words of Solomon's prayer, we are reminded that our faith has deep roots in a tradition that takes seriously the prayers of those who may not share our practices of faith, yet seek you as sincerely as we do.

As we listen to the words of Jesus, bravely spoken at the Temple in Jerusalem, we hear the warning to all who claim to be religious, that we not use the house of God as a place to further our own interests and desires, but that we allow ourselves to be transformed by the very life of prayer to consider the plight of our neighbors who stand in need of your justice and your redemptive love.

And now we pray as Jesus taught us.

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 Christians, Haste"

#565 blue hymnal

*O Christians, haste, your mission high fulfilling, to tell the world that God is one who cares,
That God who made all nations is not willing one life should perish, lost in deep despair.*

Refrain: Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace, tidings of Jesus, redemption and release.

*Proclaim to every people, tongue and nation, that God, in whom we live and move, is love.
Tell how God stooped to save a lost creation, and died on earth that we might live above. R*

Give of your sons to bear the message glorious, give of your daughters, speed them on their way.

Pour out your soul for them in prayer victorious, till God shall bring a new and joyful day. R

***Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace.

Postlude