

Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor
Order of Worship for Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 18, 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

Beloved in God, we have come together this morning to celebrate life in the household of God. We will talk and sing and pray about foundations, and tents, and buildings, and dwelling places, and about the One who is the cornerstone of our faith, and how even we are built into the house that God has made with open doors, so that generations to come may know that there is a holy place where they are always welcome to come home, because

Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

***Hymn**

"The Church's One Foundation"

#544, vss 1-2, 4-5

***The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation, by water and the word:
From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.***

***Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation: one Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses with every grace endued.***

***Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation of peace forevermore,
Till with the vision glorious he longing eyes are blest,
And the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.***

***Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with Thee.***

Responsive Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:11, 12-22

The Letter to the Ephesians celebrates a mystery in the heart of God: despite all the divisions that seem apparent among us, all God's people are one. The letter is written by Jewish followers of Jesus to their foreign neighbors, to tell them that all are welcome in the fellowship of Christ. Listen:

So then, remember that you Gentiles by birth.. were at one time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. Christ has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

So then, we are no longer strangers and aliens, but we are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom we also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God

***Hymn**

"In Christ There Is No East or West"

#600

***In Christ there is no east or west, in him no pride of birth;
The chosen family God has blessed now spans the whole wide earth.***

***For God in Christ has made us one from every land and race;
Has reconciled us through his Son and met us all with grace.***

***It is by grace we are assured that we belong to him;
The love we share in Christ our Lord, the Spirit's work within.***

***So brothers, sisters, praise his nae who died to set us free
From sin division, hate and shame, from spite and enmity!***

***In Christ there is no east or west – he breaks all barriers down;
By Christ redeemed, by Christ possessed, in Christ we live as one.***

Opening Prayer (unison)

We have found our home in you, O God, and we rejoice in the good news of your salvation. Only let us remember that the greatest joy is achieved when your sacred house is filled with all the rich mixture of human shape and form and color and all the differing perceptions that enrich the whole household that belongs to you. We know that this will only be when we discover the truths that lie within one another's souls; so grant that we may achieve an openness of spirit to listen and to grow into the fullness that is Christ in all of us. Amen.

***Response #482**

***Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true;
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.***

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people of Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more, and evildoers shall afflict them no more as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish

his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.

Sermon: "A House for God?"

David the king has built for himself a majestic house of Cedar, but the God of Israel still dwells in a tent, and David and the prophet Nathan feel embarrassed that the king lives in luxury, while no permanent provision has been made for God. But is a house of cedar something that God needs? Today we'll explore the needs and wants of God, and we'll ask what kind of house God seeks for a dwelling place in our midst.

Special Music "If My People Will Pray" Diana Ridener

Pastoral Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, guide our hearts to you. May we, who have listened to your Word in this hour of worship, now consider how you call to us to be both builders and building stones of your household of reconciling unity and peace.

Open our eyes, that we may see your purpose for us; open our ears, that we may hear your calling in the voices of our neighbors near and far. Grant us a passion for spending our days as workers and as residents of your household of faith.

May our testimony to the truth of Christ's Gospel be formed by actions: accepting people as they are, ministering to those who are in need, and setting aside all prejudice and fear to make sure everyone has a place at the table.

We lift up before you those in our fellowship who are troubled in body or in spirit, those recovering from illness or injury, those suffering from anger or depression or a sense of loss. We pray for communities stricken by natural disasters, heat and flood, and for those afflicted with political division, displacement and war. Give us confidence in our ability to make a difference in our world, along with the humility to recognize our need to seek understanding ahead of action..

As Jesus has taught us, let us 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.

*Community of Christ, who make the cross your own,
Live out your creed and risk your life for God alone;
The God who wears your face, to whom all worlds belong,
Whose children are of every race and every song.*

*Community of Christ, look past the church's door
And see the refugee, the hungry, and the poor.
Take hands with the oppressed, the jobless in your street,
Take towel and water, that you wash your neighbor's feet.*

*Community of Christ, through whom the word must sound –
Cry out for justice and for peace the whole world round:
Disarm the powers that war and all that can destroy,
Turn bombs to bread, and tears of anguish into joy.*

*When menace melts away, so shall God's will be done,
The climate of the world be peace and Christ its sun;
Our currency be love and kindness our law,
Our food and faith be shared as one forevermore.*

***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