

St Paul United Church of Christ  
5312 Old Blue Rock Road  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247  
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor  
**Order of Worship for The Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**Festival of the Christian Home**  
**May 9, 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. )*

Morning Announcements and Prayer Requests

Prelude (recording begins)

The Great Commandment: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

**\*Hymn #607**

***Happy the home when God is there, and love fills everyone,  
when with united work and prayer the Master's will is done.***

***Happy the home where God's strong love is starting to appear,  
where all the children hear his fame and parents hold him dear.***

***Happy the home where prayer is heard, and praise is everywhere,  
where parents love the sacred Word, and its true wisdom share.***

***Lord, let us in our homes agree this blessed peace to gain;  
unite our hearts in love to Thee, and love to all will reign.***

## Responsive Psalm 128 (Common English Bible)

*Unless it is the Lord who builds the house, the builders' work is pointless.  
Unless it is the Lord who protects the city, the guard on duty is pointless.  
It is pointless that you get up early and stay up late, eating the bread of hard labor  
because God gives sleep to those God loves.*

***No doubt about it: children are a gift from the Lord;  
the fruit of the womb is a divine reward.***

***The children born when one is young are like arrows in the hand of a warrior.***

***The person who fills a quiver full with them is truly happy!***

***They won't be ashamed when arguing with their enemies at the gate.***

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures: Isaiah 66:10-14

*Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy,  
all you who mourn over her – that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling  
breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom. For thus says  
the Lord: I will extend the prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like  
an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on  
her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted  
in Jerusalem. You shall see, and your heart will rejoice; your bodies shall flourish like the  
grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the Lord is with God's servants, God's  
indignation against God's enemies.*

**Hymn** (Words are paraphrase from Isaiah 66. Tune is #470, "Rest" in Worship and Rejoice Hymnal)

***As those whose mother comforts them, shall comfort come to you.  
Then you shall see, your hearts rejoice; your limbs shall flourish like the grass.  
So shall I comfort you.***

***So shall the hand of God be known to rest upon our lives,  
that servants of our God above, who charge the earth with holy love,  
live blest in paradise.***

***I know your works; I know your thoughts; and I am coming soon  
to gather all the lands and tongues in celebration and in song;  
for Christ makes all things new.***

New Testament Lesson: 2 Timothy 1:1-7

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*I am grateful to God – whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did – when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now, I am sure, lives in you.*

*For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and love and of self-discipline.*

## Sermon

Today, on what is known as Mother's Day in our society and is celebrated in the church as the Festival of the Christian Home, we lift up and give thanks for the gift of parents and all those who have fulfilled our need for nurturing care in our developing years.

We remember the Scriptures of both Old and New Testaments that call for parents to share our faith from generation to generation, recognizing that, in this time of increasing diversity of belief, there is also the need to listen to one another's insights across the generations, to find those elements of value that are most essential to be preserved and those values newly perceived in a constantly evolving world.

On this day, we, who often refer to God as "Father," are also called to remember that Scripture has many references as well to God's motherly care for us, and to realize that the image of God's love that Scripture invites us to emulate includes the full adherence to behaviors of justice and compassion that are included in the Bible's witness.

## Musical Interlude

## Pastoral Prayer

God, our heavenly parent, we come before you this morning in a spirit of thankfulness for the blessings of nurture we have received. Each of us comes with our own experiences of family. There are those among us whose childhood was blessed with consistency and love. There are those among us whose families struggled under the pressures of the world. Many of us are thankful for the wider families that helped us to grow and develop and feel secure – aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters and

cousins who were there to provide the support we needed growing up. For mothers and fathers and all those others who sheltered us and guided us, we give you thanks.

Within our memories also are others, not related to us by blood, who came into our lives and cared for us in moments of personal need and decision-making, providing nurture for us in moments when we were alone. We pause for a moment to remember them, and to realize that their presence is also a gift that came from you, and that the gift of “family” is a gift that is to be shared in the broader family of all those you love.

We pray that we too may partner with one another to form the kind of community of mutual support and care that fulfills the vision of ancient prophets and leaders of the early church, who sought to bring your heavenly realm of justice, love and peace to the whole human family. May this be our calling; and may we accept the commitment of sacrificial love – the kind attributed to the best of mothers – to bring it into being.

Holy God, we lift up before you those in our fellowship who have need today of your nurturing care – those who are ill, those recovering from surgery, those who may feel alone or depressed because of social isolation, and those made weary by the troubles of life. We lift up also our neighbors far away and those nearby who experience alienation in the world, because of racial or ethnic discrimination, economic oppression or the traumas of displacement from the settled communities of their homelands. For any of these, both known and unknown to us, we pray that your nurturing care may be made known through the kindness of those who live by your commandments of 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 #426 New Century Hymnal “O God, whose steadfast love”**

***O God, whose steadfast love true motherhood has blessed;  
who shields the infant small upon its mother’s breast;  
Embrace us, too, O God, our God, and hold us in your loving arms,  
and hold us in your loving arms.***

*Your promises, O God, so sure throughout the years,  
have lived in mothers' hearts, have bloomed from mothers' tears.  
So Sarah laughed, and Hannah wept, and singing Mary secrets kept.  
And singing Mary secrets kept.*

*In your great love, O God, full parenthood is known;  
a father mourns his child, a mother's strength is shown.  
Let parents' faithful lives unbind your love that through them  
we might find Christ's deeper love for humankind.*

*May your household of faith one family become,  
that love may be increased and none may be alone;  
that mother's love and father's care and children's joy  
we all may share, and children's joy we all may share.*

*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