

Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor
Order of Worship for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Labor Sunday
September 5, 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 and the Praise of God (Psalm 146:1-2, 5-10)

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the strangers, and upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked, God brings to ruin.

The Lord will reign forever, our God for all generations. Praise the Lord!

***Hymn #459 "Come, All Christians, Be Committed"**

***Come, all Christians, be committed to the service of the Lord;
make your lives for him more fitted, tune your hearts with one accord.
Come into his courts with gladness, all your sacred vows renew,
turn away from sin and sadness, be transformed with life anew.***

*Of your time and talents give now, they are gifts from God above,
to be used by Christians freely to proclaim God's wondrous love.
Come again to serve the Savior, tithes and offerings with you bring;
in your work, with Christ find favor, and with joy his praises sing.*

*Come in praise and adoration, all who on Christ's name believe;
worship him with consecration, grace and love will you receive.
For his grace give Christ the glory, for the Spirit and the Word,
and repeat the gospel story until all his name have heard.*

Litany for Labor Day Weekend, written by The Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) adapted:

Let us pray to the Lord of all creation, from whom comes life and work and purpose.
Almighty God, when you formed us lovingly out of the dust of the earth, you breathed
into us the breath of life and gave us work and purpose for living.

You placed us in the garden of Eden to till and keep it.

Through our work, you made us co-creators with you, shaping the world in which we
live.

You gave dignity to our labor by sending your Son to labor with us.

By our labor, you enrich the world.

By our labor, we enjoy the fruits of creation.

By our labor, we find direction and purpose.

By our labor, our families are made secure.

For providing varieties of work and for blessing us by our labor,

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those who plow the field and those who make the plow; for farmers and farm
workers, for steelworkers and machinists; for those who work with their hands and
those who move the earth,

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those who tend the sick and those who seek new cures; for doctors and nurses, for
scientists and technicians; for those who keep notes and those who transcribe,

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those who think and those who create; for inventors and explorers, for artists and
musicians, for those who write books and those who entertain,

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those who work in offices and those who work in warehouses; for secretaries and
receptionists, for stockers and bookkeepers, for those who market products and for
those who move them,

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those who inspire our minds and those who motivate us; for teachers and preachers, for public servants and religious servants; those who help the poor and those who work with our children,

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those whose labor is tidiness and cleanliness, for janitors and sanitary workers, for drycleaners and housekeepers, for those who produce cleaning products and those who use them,

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those who sail the waves and those who fly the skies, for captains and attendants, for astronauts and deep sea divers, for those who chart and those who navigate,

We give you thanks, O Lord.

For those who serve in the nation's armed forces, for police officers and firefighters and all who protect and keep us safe,

We give you thanks, O Lord.

You bless us all with the skills and gifts of labor.

You provide us opportunities to use them, for the benefit of others as well as ourselves.

Guard and protect those who labor in the world.

Bless the work of our hands, O Lord.

Look kindly upon the unemployed, the disabled, and those who have lost positions due to economic change.

Give health to the sick, and opportunity to those whose livelihood is taken.

Keep us from laboring only for greed.

Make us loving and responsible in all that we do.

Creator God, we pray for a time when all people have work that enhances human dignity and bonds us to one another. Give us pride in our work, a fair return for our labor, and joy in knowing that our work finds its source in you.

Amen.

***Hymn #723**

"For the Fruit of All Creation"

For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God.

For God's gifts to every nation, thanks be to God.

*For the plowing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe keeping, thanks be to God.*

In the just reward of labor, God's will is done.

In the help we give our neighbor, God's will is done.

*In our worldwide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.*

***For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us,
most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God.***

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures: Proverbs 22:1-2, 7-9, 16, 22-23

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all... The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender. Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of anger will fail. Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor....

Oppressing the poor in order to enrich oneself, and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss....

Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the Lord pleads their cause and despoils of life those who despoil them.

Epistle Lesson: James 2:1-17

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.... So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Sermon:

Divine Economics and our Vocation

*Hymn #617, vss 1-3, 5

"A Place at the Table"

*For everyone born, a place at the table, for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing, for everyone born, a star overhead,*

*Refrain: and God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice, justice and joy!*

*For woman and man, a place at the table, revising the roles, deciding the share,
with wisdom and grace, dividing the power, for woman and man, a system that's fair.*

R

*For young and for old, a place at the table, a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled, for young and for old, the right to
belong.*

R

*For everyone born, a place at the table, to live without fear, and simply to be,
to work, to speak out, to witness and worship, for everyone born, the right to be free.*

R

Sacrament of Holy Communion

We have come now to the moment of sharing within the wide fellowship of grace. As we entered this morning, we brought our offerings and placed them in the plate, and they reminded us of our labors of the week. The meal of fruit and bread upon the table remind us, too, of the gifts that have been brought by faithful people for all the generations of our faith, to be shared as the gifts of labor that belong to the whole community as we gather to commune with one another and with God. This is the meal that Jesus invited us to share, remembering him in the community he has formed, so that we may become the living Body that carries out his purpose, to bring the works of heaven to the earth.

The bread and the wine are the symbols of Christ's Body, and Christ's blood given for us all.

Thanks be to God!

And we, as we share this meal, become the Body, reaching out in the world to share God's love.

May the holy love, incarnate in Jesus, revealed by his life and teachings, confirmed by his death and resurrection, and placed in our hearts as a pure gift of grace, be our work and our mission to share in all the world.

Let us pray:

God of justice, love and grace, look into us, to the depth of our souls. May these gifts of food and drink made sacred by your love be to us the body and blood of Jesus Christ. You have gathered us to make us one and whole. May your presence be known to us in the Body that is shaped by our efforts to express your love, and may the Spirit of your presence overflow to shape our lives as we leave this place and follow our several paths. We give you thanks for this sacred space where we have come to learn your way and to find strength for the journey in this fellowship where we place our trust in you. We pray today for members of our congregation who are ill, for those who are recovering from illness or injury, for those who cannot be with us physically but are remembered in our midst. We pray for those throughout the world who suffer from famine, drought, fire, wind and flood. We pray for those in nations made unstable by political discord and economic injustice. Insofar as it is possible for us, we pray that we may be your instruments of healing in our troubled world. As members of the community of faith, we look toward the day of your Holy Realm, the gathering of the nations on the day of peace, at the table where all are welcome and all enjoy the abundance you have made.

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.**

Receive now the bread of heaven, the Body of Christ as it is shared among us.

Receive the drink poured out for the life of the world.

May the blessing of the Holy Communion of Christ be and abide with us now and forevermore. Amen.

***Closing Hymn #615**

“Community of Christ”

***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