

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS****CALL TO WORSHIP:**

*Sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth!  
Sing to the LORD, praise his name;  
proclaim his salvation day after day!  
Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous deeds among all peoples!*  
Let us worship God.

(Psalm 96.1-3)

**HYMN:** O sing to our God!**PRAYER OF APPROACH AND CONFESSION:**

Holy and loving God:

We come into your presence together — whether in person or virtually — to converse with you in the words and actions of worship. Enable us to hear and understand your word to us, we pray; and may our words to you be genuine and true. Through this conversation, may we be led further in your ways, and be encouraged and empowered to continue our service for you in the week ahead.

As we begin our worship, though, we are conscious of our sinfulness — our lack of success in being the people you want us to be, and in doing the things you want us to do. We so easily imitate the ways of the world around us, and feel uncomfortable standing out as people who belong to you. We are easily offended by the words and actions of others, and often view their motives with mistrust and suspicion. The things we do and fail to do are often governed by self-centered desires and short-term thinking.

Forgive us, gracious God. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, enable us to change our ways, and give us power to live in your ways more fully.

We pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior; and we pray together, now, as he taught us:

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

(Matthew 6.9-13, KJV)

**ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:**

Hear this good news from the scriptures:

*God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Jesus,  
and, through him, to reconcile all people to himself,  
by making peace through his blood,  
shed on the cross.*

(Colossians 1.19-20, ad.)

So, if we have confessed our sin to God sincerely,

let us be assured that God will forgive us.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS:

### - **Old Testament Reading:** Numbers 4.1-6, 15 - Moving the tent of meeting

This is a story from the time of the Exodus. In it, God gives instructions to Moses for packing up and moving the “tent of meeting” and its contents.

The tent of meeting, also called the “tabernacle”, was the place where God was considered to be present, where Moses would meet with him, and where the Israelites offered their sacrifices. Several generations later, it was replaced by a permanent structure — the temple in Jerusalem.

### - **Psalm:** Psalm 23 - “The LORD is my shepherd”

Psalm 23 is a well-known psalm of trust, in which the writer expresses his confidence in God’s care.

The writer uses two images to express his thoughts: first, the image of a sheep being cared for by a shepherd, and second, the image of a guest at a banquet provided by a generous host.

### - **Gospel Reading:** John 4.21-26 - “Neither here nor in Jerusalem”

This is part of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. At this point in the conversation, they’re talking about where the proper place to worship God is.

### - **Letter Reading:** 1 Corinthians 12.1-11 - Gifts of the Spirit

This is the beginning of Paul’s discussion on the topic of “gifts of the Spirit”. Paul’s point is that there is a whole variety of such gifts, which enable Christians to take part in the ministry of the church.

**HYMN:** I am the church! You are the church!

**SERMON:** “The Church” - *Keith Kelly (See separate document)*

**HYMN:** The church’s one foundation ...

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

Gracious God:

We give you thanks for the privilege of being part of your church — your worldwide family — in which you are present in the world through the Holy Spirit. We thank you for deeming us human beings worthy of carrying on the ministry of Jesus in some small way, in our own time and place. We thank you for the guidance and enabling power that the Holy Spirit gives, and we pray that we may be faithful in discerning and carrying out the tasks he gives us. En-

able us in particular to show to the people around us the same kind of love that you show toward us — being kind, gracious, generous, and willing to be reconciled.

We pray for our own congregation, and congregations like ours, in this difficult time when the pandemic is keeping us apart, and keeping us from doing the things we normally would be doing. Enable us to keep in touch with each other, to show care and concern for each other, and not to lose the sense of community that we feel. Enable us to do the best we can under the circumstances, and to keep on looking ahead with anticipation to the time when the pandemic will have subsided.

We give thanks for the ministry of the Soup Kitchen, that it has now been back in operation for more than six months. We thank you for the many volunteers and donors who make the Soup Kitchen possible, and we pray that you would bless and prosper the work that they do. We pray also for those who come to eat at the Soup Kitchen, who all are experiencing challenges of one kind or other, that your blessing and guidance may be with them each day, to sustain them.

We pray for members of our congregation, and others close to us, who are experiencing difficulties of various kinds — in particular, Harold Graham and family, and also others whom we now name before you: \_\_\_\_\_. Grant each one your comfort, strength, and healing, we pray. May they find encouragement in their relationship with you and their relationships with family members, friends, and fellow church members.

We pray also for the world around us. We pray about the polarization that exists in our society, in which various groups of people with opinions different from others feel alienated from those with whom they disagree, and snipe at each other, rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue. We pray that leaders in all spheres of influence may model the kind of dialogue that is needed, rather than intensifying the feelings of defensiveness and alienation.

In this regard, we pray in particular for the current protests over vaccine mandates. We pray for wisdom for political and business leaders, that they may seek to de-fuse the rhetoric and the hostility, and find a way to promote greater tolerance for opposite viewpoints.

We pray again about the tension between Russia and Ukraine, that leaders on both sides of that confrontation may seek a way of resolving the dispute without resorting to violence and bloodshed. At the same time, we pray for places around the world where there *is* violence and bloodshed, that the international community may exert whatever influence it has to resolve the conflicts through negotiation and compromise. We pray also for people in various parts of the world living in extreme poverty. We pray that you would guide and bless efforts to provide meaningful assistance and to relieve suffering.

And we continue to pray about the pandemic. We pray for doctors, nurses, and others in the health care system looking after large numbers of people being hospitalized: continue to grant them strength and stamina, as well as the resources and assistance they need to do their work effectively. We pray for governments and public health authorities, who are under pressure to ease restrictions: may they not do so too quickly, and risk another upswing in numbers of infections and hospitalizations. We pray for businesses and charities negatively affected by pandemic restrictions, that they may receive the assistance they need to sustain

them, and not be forced to cease operations. Indeed, gracious God, sustain us all during this lengthy and stressful experience. Help us to maintain a positive attitude, and to make the best of a situation over which we have no control.

We thank you that you hear our prayers, gracious God; and we offer them up to you in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

## **OFFERING**

### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

God of love and generosity:

We thank you for adopting us as your children through the saving work of Jesus, and for making us part of your worldwide family.

We thank you for your daily blessings, through which you provide for our daily needs, and sustain us. We thank you for the relationships that enrich our lives, and for the responsibilities that give our lives meaning and focus.

In response, we gratefully present to you our offerings. May they help support the work that your church does for you in the world, both nearby and far away, as the community of your people and your servants.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**HYMN:** Forth in thy name, o Lord, I go

### **COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING:**

Sisters and brothers in Christ:

As God has called us together to worship him,  
he now sends us out again to continue serving him.

So, go in peace,  
and in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

And may God bless you:

May he guide and equip you to do the tasks he gives you,  
and may he strengthen you for each day's challenges;  
in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.