

### GATHERING AROUND GOD'S WORD

*You are invited to silently pray as you prepare to offer thanksgiving to God.*

**Thank you, loving Lord, for setting us free from sin, so that we can willingly serve you. Open our eyes and hearts to see the needs of others and show them your compassion. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.**

### GREETING

(close eyes) How good it is to be alive! We feel the beat of our own hearts, the pulsing of life in our veins, the rhythm of our breathing. We come into the silence of this time with gratitude for this day. *(Silence)* We come with our needs. And we come because we have gifts to share. In our coming and in our going and in our gathering this day may we be strengthened in our bonds of love and peace for our Lord and one another.

### PSALM OF PRAISE (Psalm 145)

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you, and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness. They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made. All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you. They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power, to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

### VOLUNTARY

*Concerto No. 1 in A Minor (Second Movement)  
Melody Davis, Piano and Carlos Vargos, Vell*

Camille St. Saens

\*PROCESSIONAL HYMN 839 *Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine*

### CALL TO CONFESSION

By confessing our sin before God and living in promised forgiveness, may we experience and share the healing, compassion, justice and love of Jesus Christ.

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**We come before you, confessing that we do not always welcome others as we should. Forgive us, O God. Call us back to your ways of mercy, compassion and love. Help us to see our neighbor as ourselves, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to know our neighbor as Christ knows us. In the name of the One who loves us, we pray. Amen.**

### ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

When we are lost, Christ will help us find the way. When we cannot see the light, Christ will light the way. When we are forgotten, Christ remembers us. We are loved, we are welcomed with open arms, and we are embraced by God. Share the good news and know that you are forgiven. Amen.

RESPONSE 582 *Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me*

## PROCLAIMING GOD'S WORD

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of Love, give us courage and an open spirit as we consider the life and teachings of Jesus through the gift of your holy scriptures. May your Holy Word that so welcomes us -live in our hearts and be lived out in our words and deeds with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen

### EPISTLE READING (*The Message Version*)

Romans 6: 12-23

<sup>12-14</sup> That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.

### What Is True Freedom?

<sup>15-18</sup> So, since we're out from under the old tyranny, does that mean we can live any old way we want? Since we're free in the freedom of God, can we do anything that comes to mind? Hardly. You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do. But thank God you've started listening to a new master, one whose commands set you free to live openly in *his* freedom! <sup>19</sup> I'm using this freedom language because it's easy to picture. You can readily recall, can't you, how at one time the more you did just what you felt like doing—not caring about others, not caring about God—the worse your life became and the less freedom you had? And how much different is it now as you live in God's freedom, your lives healed and expansive in holiness? <sup>20-21</sup> As long as you did what you felt like doing, ignoring God, you didn't have to bother with right thinking or right living, or right *anything* for that matter. But do you call that a free life? What did you get out of it? Nothing you're proud of now. Where did it get you? A dead end. <sup>22-23</sup> But now that you've found you don't have to listen to sin tell you what to do, and have discovered the delight of listening to God telling you, what a surprise! A whole, healed, put-together life right now, with more and more of life on the way! Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is *real life*, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master.

### ANTHEM

*Breath of God*  
*Sanctuary Choir*

Shelton Curry

### NEW TESTAMENT READING (*The Message Version*)

Matthew 10: 40-42

<sup>40-42</sup> “We are intimately linked in this harvest work. Anyone who accepts what you do, accepts me, the One who sent you. Anyone who accepts what I do accepts my Father, who sent me. Accepting a messenger of God is as good as being God's messenger. Accepting someone's help is as good as giving someone help. This is a large work I've called you into, but don't be overwhelmed by it. It's best to start small. Give a cool cup of water to someone who is thirsty, for instance. The smallest act of giving or receiving makes you a true apprentice. You won't lose out on a thing.”

\*HYMN 203 *Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love*

### SERMON

*Holy Hospitality*

Sherry Holloman

## RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

### \*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**Into the silence of the void the Creator spoke, and the world came into being. The Word of God in the vastness brought light from darkness, matter from nothing, flesh from dust, life from lifelessness.**

**In the quiet of a small town in Palestine the Word of God came to us. Even though of one being with the Creator, Jesus our Christ, taking on human form, was born, lived and walked among us, speaking the words of life. He was crucified, died, and was buried. He rose from the dead and speaks to us today. He is the one who saves us from ourselves.**

**In the stillness of our souls the Spirit of God, who is one with the Creator and the Christ, whispers the Word, and calls us back to the Creator, back to the Christ, back to the wholeness of everlasting life in the unity of the Creator, Christ and Spirit.**

#### PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Author of Life, You have written Your covenant into our hearts. You have called us to welcome the stranger, to show compassion to those who are in need, to care for those who mourn. Help us to mold our lives to be more in tune with Your call to welcome others as You have welcomed us. May we witness Your welcome in all that we do. For it is in your name we ask this saying:

**...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.**

#### OFFERTORY SENTENCE

Our Lord's heart abounds with gifts...gifts that we so freely receive. Our prayer today it that the offerings we bring will continue to be a sign of our trust in our Lord and our intention to live surrounded by his mercy, inspired by his Spirit, open to the joy of his presence, hospitable to one another and generous toward the world God has created for us.

#### PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

*Shall Tribulation and Distress  
Melody Davis*

Sally Ann Morris

\*RESPONSE 706 *We Give Thee But Thine Own* (verse 1)

#### \*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks with grateful hearts for lives transformed through your love revealed in the one whose birth we await once more - Jesus Christ. We offer these gifts and the service of our lives, praying that they may be used to transform the lives of those in need. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

#### GOING INTO THE WORLD WITH GOD'S WORD

\*CHORAL BENEDICTION

*The Lord Bless You and Keep You  
Sanctuary Choir*

Peter Lutkin

*\*You are invited to stand if you wish*