

Home Service for May 3, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

*Trusting God sounds so simple, but trust is a journey. Join the journey toward trust, for Christ will show us the way.*

Call to Worship:

Come to Christ, our cornerstone. Christ has called us here.

Trust in God, our firm foundation. God is with us here.

Rest in the Spirit, our peace beyond peace. May the Spirit guide our way.

Opening Prayer:

Faithful God, you are our refuge and our strength, a mighty fortress in a world of chaos and turmoil. Protect us, but also encourage us to be brave. Strengthen us to face this world and to make it a better place. Inspire our worship, that in this time we may deepen our faith and place our trust in you. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

We claim that you sent Jesus to us to take away the sin of the world and to say that we are part of that sin. Maybe our small errors add up; or maybe there is no degree to sin, that one is as hurtful as another. Help us not to dwell on vocabulary. Help us not to focus on what sin means but to acknowledge that we do things that hurt other people, and the creation, and ourselves, and you. Come into our hearts, then, and give us strength and courage to be less hurtful and more loving. These things we pray in the name of Jesus, who showed us how this is done. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

*Friends, hear the good news: Jesus came not to condemn us, but to love us and save us and show us the way. Know that we are forgiven and be at peace.*

*Alleluia! Amen.*

Read Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame;

- deliver me in your righteousness.
- <sup>2</sup> Turn your ear to me,  
come quickly to my rescue;  
be my rock of refuge,  
a strong fortress to save me.
- <sup>3</sup> Since you are my rock and my fortress,  
for the sake of your name lead and guide me.
- <sup>4</sup> Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,  
for you are my refuge.
- <sup>5</sup> Into your hands I commit my spirit;  
deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.
- <sup>15</sup> My times are in your hands;  
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,  
from those who pursue me.
- <sup>16</sup> Let your face shine on your servant;  
save me in your unfailing love.

#### Prayers of the People:

*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. We pray this day that we may come to a clearer understanding that you have more interest in our character than in our comfort. Where we have need of correction, speak plainly to us and grant us the courage to make the changes you would bring in our lives. May the love we express for you on this Sunday morning continue throughout the coming week. Strengthen this congregation, we pray, in order that we may become more effective in our ministry, in our service, and in our witness to the community. Remind us to for those we have named this morning and let us never forget you hear and answer our prayer in the way that is best for each of us. Let not ever forget that our prayers do make a difference in the lives who we pray for. In the name of the risen Christ, Amen.*

#### 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Acts 7:55-60

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup>“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

<sup>57</sup> At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, <sup>58</sup> dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

<sup>59</sup> While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup> Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Peter 2:2-10

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house<sup>[a]</sup> to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says:

“See, I lay a stone in Zion,  
a chosen and precious cornerstone,  
and the one who trusts in him  
will never be put to shame.”<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>8</sup> and,  
“A stone that causes people to stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall.”<sup>[d]</sup>

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 14:1-14

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God<sup>[a]</sup>; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. <sup>4</sup> You know the way to the place where I am going.”<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you really know me, you will know<sup>[b]</sup> my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” <sup>8</sup> Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup> Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. <sup>11</sup> Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

## Message

The words of today’s Gospel are so often read at funerals that it seems odd not to be at a funeral. These words are so often used to assure the family and friends of the deceased that the deceased is in a better place, a place assured from the day of their baptism. These are, indeed, words of encouragement about our life after death but I think they have more importance about our life after Jesus’ death. It is about how we will live together as believers, in light of the reality that Jesus has died for each of us.

These are words meant as comfort for the disciples as they are forced to consider life without Jesus. A time that Jesus had insisted, over and over again, that they must consider. For life as they knew it would never be the same again. They were faced with changes that they neither welcome nor for which they felt prepared. Yes, funeral words for us even though we are alive. Yet words for us, to prepare us for a post-Easter life in a world that seems hostile and unwelcomed. Words for our life after Jesus’ death. How do Jesus’ words speak to us and our world? We know and have experienced the same fear, the same disorientation as Jesus’ original disciples. We live in a world of unprecedented change. We may be tired of hearing about it, but ‘change’ is nothing new and will not go away. In the midst of the

disorientation of change we need something to give us hope; we need an anchor. And so, we have these words, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” And “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

Words are sometimes too easy and not nearly enough. We can imagine how the disciples received these words. Their lives were turned up-side-down. The glory years of teaching, healing, the crowds, were suddenly a thing of the past. The intimate times of the daybreak breakfasts at the seashore, quiet times in the garden, times with Jesus, became a faint memory. Reality was the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, death and now they were huddled in fear. They had no idea how to go on, how to live, what all of this meant for their lives in the future. “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” Indeed!! These words, no doubt, seemed meaningless, they were troubled. Jesus seems so far away, they felt so very much alone.

We have a good idea of how the disciples must have felt. We, too, have faced with unwelcomed change. The church as we know it is struggling, we are getting older, the “good old days” seem long gone and we are tempted to huddle in fear. But the words come to us, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.” Sometimes we are tempted to just say, “It is too late.”

We all know and have experienced fear and doubt. Change has gripped our world for so many times over the years, and not much of it has been good. We have watched towns die, schools close, hospitals down-graded, mines close and churches close. We long for the “good old days”, for stability and an absence of fear. We can feel lost and look for a way out of it all. We understand Thomas’ wonder, “Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way.” We agree with Philip who wanted a road map. “Show us the Father, show us a sure sign of your presence in our lives and we may be fine.”

At times, we even want to cry out, “Lord, we are afraid. Stop the change for a least some breathing space.” And Jesus says, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Thankfully this is not some over the horizon, “safe spot when we die” kind of place. This is a relationship with Jesus Christ that will go with us into whatever we will find in the future. Nothing that we know, except the love of God in Christ Jesus, will be truly secure. Change will continue, but we need not be afraid because Jesus is with us. Jesus does not promise us easy sailing, but he does promise we will not be alone. Thankfully, it is in this journey called life that Jesus promises to be with us.

We will need to travel light, letting go of whatever nostalgia would keep us from traveling into the future with Jesus. All that we might think will give us security, apart for Jesus, in time will only let us down. When jobs, health, family, wealth,

politics, or whatever, let us down, all we can be sure of is that God is unchanging. Fact is that it is not anything new, and we have sung that fact for years, when we sing the hymn, Abide with Me. Remember the words: “Change and decay in all around I see ... O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”

In the midst of all that changes, Christ assures us, “you will live in the presence of God, now and forever.” Change can be scary, but it cannot destroy. So how do we live? We live as people “on the way.” Remembering that Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The way is a journey and not a destination. We are to live as people on a journey. The metaphor of “journey” has been a powerful image for all of humankind. You see it in the Bible, in literature. All great religions of the world describe themselves as journey. Jesus says “I am the way, the truth and the life, and that is enough for our journey, our only guarantee.

We travel together, seeking to include everyone, because Jesus’ love includes everyone. We need to make room for others. Jesus is the truth because, all we can really depend on, everything that has meaning for our lives is blessed by him. Love is what motivates us. It has been written, “through love alone can we be pleasing to God, and our sole ambition is to acquire it.”

The “way” is not about waiting for the time we check in to our reservation in that “mansion just over the hilltop.” The “way” is about doing what Jesus had been doing in our life today, and every day; we are assured that we will do greater things. Jesus’ ministry was a short three years or so and covered very little territory. We are able to do much more. We are to do what Jesus did: feed the hungry, welcome the lost, heal the sick, lift up the oppressed. This Gospel lesson is not so much about life after death but it is really about life in relationship with one who died for us. This lesson is about our life here and now. Jesus does not give us a how-to manual for life ahead, but he does assure us that he will be with us, that he is the way, the truth and the life.

Jesus tells us: “I am the Way the Truth and the Life”, and invites us to continue on our life journey, not knowing what the journey may hold but knowing that Jesus goes with us, and that is enough. Amen.

Benediction:

*May God bless you as you leave this place to follow the Way, to seek after the Truth, and to rejoice in the Life of the Triune God who draws us together and sends us out to be agents of Resurrection life in a hurting world. Amen.*