

Home Service for July 5, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

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

‘May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes’ Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear In the place of ancestors you . . . shall have sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations; therefore the peoples will praise you for ever and ever.

Call to Worship:

We gather together this morning, O Lord, eager to feel your healing touch for our wounded spirits and weary souls. Flood our lives with your peace. Shine your light of joy in our souls this day, for we pray in Christ’s Name. AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

God of heaven and earth, we gather in Your presence with thanksgiving and praise for the way in which You have revealed Yourself to us. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, we have come to know and love You; we have witnessed Your love and mercy in action; we have caught a glimpse of Your heart, and we have received the call to follow. Continue to reveal Yourself to us as we worship. May Your Holy Spirit open our minds and hearts to Your presence here, and to the word that You have for us this morning. We long to meet You here, and to know You better. In the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

God of us all, we incline our ears to you now, listening, again, for the sound of your voice. We do not always remember to listen, O God. We do not always remember to hear when you speak into our hearts. We do not always remember to look deeper than the surface. We do not always seek your guidance or follow it. But we remember now, and we long to listen now—to hear and to see, to seek and to follow. Turn us away from all that is just noise and back to the sound of your soul. To your heart beating for us always. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

God speaks into our hearts words of love and of grace. With joy and gladness does our Creator lead us into life. The Holy One makes each of our names a celebration in all generations and in this moment too. For God has made us whole again, and again.

Read Psalm 72

Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.

² May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.

³ May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.

⁴ May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.

⁵ May he endure^[a] as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.

⁶ May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.

⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.

⁸ May he rule from sea to sea
and from the River^[b] to the ends of the earth.

⁹ May the desert tribes bow before him
and his enemies lick the dust.

¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores
bring tribute to him.

May the kings of Sheba and Seba
present him gifts.

¹¹ May all kings bow down to him
and all nations serve him.

¹² For he will deliver the needy who cry out,
the afflicted who have no one to help.

¹³ He will take pity on the weak and the needy
and save the needy from death.

¹⁴ He will rescue them from oppression and violence,
for precious is their blood in his sight.

¹⁵ Long may he live!
 May gold from Sheba be given him.
 May people ever pray for him
 and bless him all day long.
¹⁶ May grain abound throughout the land;
 on the tops of the hills may it sway.
 May the crops flourish like Lebanon
 and thrive^[c] like the grass of the field.
¹⁷ May his name endure forever;
 may it continue as long as the sun.
 Then all nations will be blessed through him,^[d]
 and they will call him blessed.
¹⁸ Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel,
 who alone does marvelous deeds.
¹⁹ Praise be to his glorious name forever;
 may the whole earth be filled with his glory.
 Amen and Amen.
²⁰ This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.

Prayers of the People:

Welcoming Lord, we come before your throne of grace today. It's been quite a week for some, filled with busyness and exciting activities; for others it has been a long and lonely week. Still others have experienced ongoing troubles and frustrations, sorrows and sadness. Throughout all these conditions and at all times, you are with each one of us, giving us strength, calming our spirits; healing our wounds, celebrating the delights and triumphs. This morning we name in our hearts and by our voices loved ones who struggle with issues of health, loneliness, sorrow; we name in our hearts and by our voices those who have found great joy. Be with each person, giving strength and courage for all the times ahead. Help each one of us to remember that we can always come to you with our burdens and you will take them from us. As we pray the prayer Your Son taught us.

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 Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

So he said, “I am Abraham’s servant. ³⁵ The LORD has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. ³⁶ My master’s wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns. ³⁷ And my master made me swear an oath, and said, ‘You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live, ³⁸ but go to my father’s family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.’

⁴² “When I came to the spring today, I said, ‘LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success to the journey on which I have come. ⁴³ See, I am standing beside this spring. If a young woman comes out to draw water and I say to her, ‘Please let me drink a little water from your jar,’ ⁴⁴ and if she says to me, ‘Drink, and I’ll draw water for your camels too,’ let her be the one the LORD has chosen for my master’s son.’

⁴⁵ “Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’

⁴⁶ “She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too.’ So I drank, and she watered the camels also.

⁴⁷ “I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’

“She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milkah bore to him.’

“Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms, ⁴⁸ and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master’s brother for his son. ⁴⁹ Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn.”

⁵⁸ So they called Rebekah and asked her, “Will you go with this man?”

“I will go,” she said.

⁵⁹ So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham’s servant and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

“Our sister, may you increase
to thousands upon thousands;
may your offspring possess
the cities of their enemies.”

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her attendants got ready and mounted the camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

⁶² Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. ⁶³ He went out to the field one evening to meditate,^[a] and as he looked up, he saw camels

approaching. ⁶⁴ Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel ⁶⁵ and asked the servant, “Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?” “He is my master,” the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself. ⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. ⁶⁷ Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Romans 7:15-25a

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.^[a] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. ²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!
So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature^[b] a slave to the law of sin.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

“To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

¹⁷ “‘We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.’

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

²⁷ “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Message

Yesterday, we celebrated the fourth of July, our country’s 250th birthday, with all the flags flying and the red, white and blue decorations in the kiddie parade. Night before was the big parade with floats and bands followed by fireworks. Also, last week we said a temporary farewell to Jack Makela on Tuesday and we all know how important this church and this country along with his service to both were to him. As I was looking for a bulletin cover for his service, I was thinking about the symbols of our country, like the flag, the eagle and also for so many immigrants to this country which would include early members of Jack’s and all of our families, the Statue of Liberty.

Just think of all those immigrants, leaving everything behind; and setting sail for a new life, a better life. A life in America. And as they neared the shores of this land of opportunity, they beheld Lady Liberty, bearing a torch to light their way. And I can just imagine the hope, the joy, the excitement, the relief that washed over them in that instant. And what about that famous poem placed at the base. The words which read, in part: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

In our Gospel this morning, Jesus offers a similar sentiment, a similar welcome to the hurting and suffering of this world. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” It is not simply to immigrants he says this, but to everyone seeking a new life. A free life. He says these words to you and me.

We are so relieved to hear these words, because, life is hard. Life is wearisome. Life is full of burdens. From the worries of terrorism on all fronts, to the fears of the cancer coming back. There is also the painful notion some may fear to admit of being greedy, selfish, miserly even. We have children who are transitioning into becoming caretakers; or, parents who are becoming dependents. We have individuals suffering silently and alone, through fits of anxiety and depression and

loneliness. These, and countless other struggles we face, day in and day out. And we look for relief. Some days, we wish we could just leave it all behind us. Start fresh. We look for a new life. A life free of these burdens. And to you, to me, today, our Lord Jesus offers it, freely!

Jesus knows our every weakness. Our every sorrow. Our every pain and burden. He sees you there, lying awake at night, wrestling with your thoughts. He who promised to be “with you always even unto the end of the age,” has been there with every painful decision you have had to make. And this Jesus says to you, again, today, “Come.” No matter what you are going through, He says, “Come.” Whatever it is that has been on your mind, or the worries and fears in your heart, Jesus says, “Come.” “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

But I have to admit, that, as comforting as this is. And as true as it is, that is not fully what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 11. Yes, Jesus bids us to bring all of our cares and concerns to Him in prayer. But the fullness, the context of our Gospel reading really says nothing about daily life struggles and worries, our finances or health. This does not mean Jesus does not care about you, or that he is withholding His offer to help. In fact, He is offering you even more!

Let me remind you about some other immigrants, Moses and the Israelites. And once they rid themselves of Pharaoh’s army, they arrived in the wilderness, having left their wearisome life behind, in search of a new life, a free life. And, in Exodus 33, Moses and God are having a conversation. And Moses is looking for assurance that God will be with His people. He says, “Show me Your ways, that I may know You in order to find favor in Your sight.” And so, in response, God gives Moses the Law, the Torah. And with it, He says, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

From then on, from generation to generation, parents would teach their children, priests would instruct the assemblies of Israelites, and rabbis would teach their students. They would teach them the Law of Moses. They would teach them what they called the yoke of the Torah.

The Law crushes sinners. This yoke is crushing. And if you have ever looked at yourself and felt proud of how good you are at keeping the Law of the Lord, look again. If you have ever thought how God must be impressed with you, think again. Or, if you have ever fallen into the trap of thinking your salvation depended on your own good works, or that as long as your good actions outweigh the bad you will get to heaven, then you know just how heavy the yoke of the Torah, the Law really is. That is what Paul was getting at in Romans 7.

Paul was formerly a Pharisee. He was all about the Law. And he talks about the struggle that even he had in upholding the burden of the Law. He says, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” And then he asks, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” That is the yoke of the Law!

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You want to know God? You want to be in His presence? You want rest? Jesus tells us: “...no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. So come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Stop struggling with the yoke of the Law. For Jesus says: “Take MY yoke upon you, and learn from ME,” Not from Moses or the prophets, not from the rabbis or priests. Learn from me.

But Jesus is saying, “You do not need Moses. You need me...For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” For you and for me His yoke is easy and His burden is light, but for Him, it was the weight of the world. For Jesus, it was the fulfilling of all the Law on our behalf. For Him, it was the crushing weight of the world’s sin, yours and mine, pressing down on Him as He hung on the cross for us. And like the Statue of Liberty raising her torch high, greeting all who reach our shores, so God in Christ welcomes sinners in a dark world, with arms outstretched on a cross. “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled-masses yearning to breathe free...Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Forgiveness, that is what Jesus is offering. Grace is what he is giving. Eternal rest in Him and with Him, is what Jesus is promising. And perfection, to make us fit to be citizens of the Kingdom of God, that is what we get. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction:

May Christ who dwells in you continue to do good work in you, blessing you with grace and perseverance to continue on in the journey of faith as you grow into the image of Christ more and more every day. Amen.