

## Order of Service for May 9, 2021 8:30 AM

Livestream Link: [https://youtu.be/-w\\_SduRsevo](https://youtu.be/-w_SduRsevo)

### Prelude

P: Alleluia! Jesus Christ is arisen!

**C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**Opening Hymn:** *“With High Delight Let Us Unite”* - Hymn #483

### Confession:

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

P: Heavenly Father, on this Mother’s Day we remember how You love us as an ever faithful parent.

**C: You invite us to pray to You as Father.**

P: But we run away from You like a spoiled child. That is why Jesus cried:

**C: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”**

**All: Forgive us, Father.** (pause for silence)

P: Our heavenly Father deals with us not according to our evil, but according to His mercy in His Son, Christ Jesus, who died and rose for us. In His name and by His command, I forgive you all your sins.

**C: Amen.**

P: “For we did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,

**C: but we have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’**

### Entrance Psalm:

P: Come and hear, all you who fear God,

**C: and I will tell what He has done for my soul.**

P: Shout for joy to God, all the earth;

**C: sing to the glory of His name; give to Him glorious praise!**

P: Bless our God, O peoples;

**C: let the sound of His praise be heard,**

P: who has kept our soul among the living

**C: and has not let our feet slip.**

P: Blessed be God,

**C: because He has not rejected my prayer or removed His steadfast love from me!**

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: Come and hear, all you who fear God,

**C: and I will tell what He has done for my soul.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

P: O God, the giver of all that is good, by Your holy inspiration grant that we may think those things that are right and by Your merciful guiding accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

### **Hymn of Praise: “Thine Forever, God of Love” – Hymn #687**

#### **First Reading: Acts 10:34-48**

R: So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him. As for the word that He sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all that He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree, but God raised Him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.”

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

R: Lord, have mercy on us.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 1 John 5:1-8**

R: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him. By this we know that we love the

children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is He who came by water and blood-Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

R: Lord, have mercy on us.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Reading** - John 15:9-17

P: As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this; that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

P: Lord, have mercy on us.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Sermon Hymn:** “*What a Friend We Have in Jesus*” - **Hymn #770**

### **Sermon:** “*Friends of Jesus*” - **John 15:9-17**

We crave connection. We were created to be connected with others. We were created for friendship and family. And yet we find it difficult to do so. It’s hard to make friends. It’s hard to keep friends. It’s hard to be connected with each other.

One of the biggest challenges of the past year plus has been the isolation and the disconnectedness. Things we took for granted a year ago has been much more difficult this year. Virtual meetings allow us to stay connected, but not in the same way. Even seeing someone in person makes it difficult to recognize or talk sometimes when both are masked up. Even as more people are getting vaccinated and we’re able to get together more,

That challenge isn’t new, though. We may have lots of Facebook friends, or followers on Instagram or Twitter, but we don’t have a lot of close friends. Recent studies show that people have fewer close friends. One study from a few years ago found that the average American only has one close confidante, and some don’t have any. There’s a joke that goes around clergy

circles that says the greatest miracle Jesus ever did wasn't raising Lazarus or feeding the 5000 or calming the storm. The greatest miracle Jesus did was to have twelve close friends in his thirties.

But since we've heard for the last year that the danger is other people, it's harder to get together with others. As in many things, the pandemic and our response to it didn't always create new trends. It merely accelerated trends that were already there.

Sin's greatest power is to separate. It separates us from God and it separates us from each other. Sin seeks to divide us, to make us fight among ourselves, to have us divide the world into "us" and "them." Jesus came not to separate, but to join together. Jesus came not to divide, but to unite. Jesus came to overcome the divisions caused by sin. Jesus came to end the separation between God and humanity.

The greatest sign of love is to be willing to give up your life for your friends. We've all heard countless stories of soldiers or sailors who laid down their lives to save others. Jesus gave his life for us. Jesus gave his life for us even when we were enemies because of sin. But because of what Jesus did, now we are friends.

That new life of friendship and connection begins at Baptism, when our sins are washed away by water and the Word, and the Holy Spirit gives us faith and trust in Jesus and all that He has done for us. We don't deserve that friendship. We don't deserve that new life. The friendship is only possible because of Jesus' choice.

Being friends of Jesus doesn't just connect us to Jesus, though. It connects us to others. Just as you make other friends through your original friends' social circles, so we are connected to one another. God created us for community. We depend on other people. Not only do we need friends and family to love us and keep us company, but we also need them to help us resist temptation and overcome sin.

Other groups know that we need others in our lives to help us. That's why organizations like Weight Watchers work, because you have people who are helping you stay accountable. AA works the same way, knowing that you can't get over your addiction on your own. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book *Life Together*, views friendships like this. The central issue everyone in Christian community will face is this: will you view your fellow friend in the eyes of God, and therefore in God's image, or in your own eyes, and try to form them in your image?

In Christ, our relationships work on two levels; the vertical and the horizontal. The vertical dimension of divine connection is the relationship between us and God. The horizontal dimension of human connection is between us and other people. God created us to need both levels of connection. And only through a friendship with Jesus can you have these connections.

How do you stay connected with your friends? If you're like me, the answer may be, "Not well." But the answer relies on time and communication. It takes time to maintain friendships. It also takes communication. It takes talking back and forth, listening. That communicating may

take place on social media, or zoom, or over the phone, or even through the mail. But it needs to take place.

We stay connected to our friend Jesus in the same way. We stay connected to Jesus by spending time with him, in prayer, reading our Bibles, doing Bible studies, listening to music that points us to God and uses God's word. It takes communication, talking to God in prayer and listening to God's Word.

Being connected with Jesus, being friends with Jesus, can help us stay better connected with our friends, and being better connected with friends can help us stay better connected to Jesus. Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life in July 2020 demonstrates this. It found that 72 percent of Christians reported talking on the phone or by video at least weekly to friends or family, as did 73 percent of Jews, while only 65 percent of unaffiliated Americans reported doing so, and only 61 percent of atheists did. Religious people were also more likely to have helped friends or neighbors during the pandemic and donated to charitable organizations. Friendships help encourage more friendships.

Friendship is build best over meals, which has also been a challenge this past year. But that's part of why we join together in the special meal of Holy Communion. It not only brings us closer to God. It brings us closer to each other, as well. It creates and strengthens the community of believers and the connection to God.

Friendship also grows best when we share our fears and vulnerabilities, when we are open and honest with each other. We may sometimes be afraid to be open and honest with God, instead trying to hide from Him. But with Jesus as our friend, we have a friend with whom we can be open and honest without fear. He listens to our confessions and our prayers, and forgives us and loves us.

The pandemic has made us change how we get together. It's even made us change if we even get together. As we wait for the restrictions to end and the pandemic to be over, we rejoice that we are able to friends of Jesus because Jesus has ended the separations caused by sin and opened the way for us to be with God forever. What a wonderful promise.

### **Prayers:**

**Invitation to Holy Communion:** Our Lord Jesus came to this world to die for us. Though He I God almighty, He became one of us so that we can be His friends. He now calls us forward to renew that friendship as He offers us His true body and blood to us for the forgiveness of our sins. We hear His call. We join together in His Holy Supper:

### **The Words of Our Lord:**

#### **Lord's Prayer:**

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

**Distribution of Holy Communion:**

Hymns: “Jesus Sinners Doth Receive” – **Hymn #609**  
Alleluia, Alleluia! Hearts to Heaven” – **Hymn #477**

**Dismissal:**

**Closing Prayer:**

P: O God, from Whom all good things come: Lead us by the inspiration of Your Spirit to think those things which are right, and by Your goodness help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

**Blessing:**

(Pastor)

**C: Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:** “Hail Thou Once Despised Jesus” - **Hymn #531**

**Postlude:**

**Church Mice**

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