

Our Sunday Service Together

May 3rd 2026

Easter 5

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 31.1-5 and 15-16

In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.

Incline your ear to me; make haste to deliver me.

Be my strong rock, a fortress to save me, for you are my rock and my stronghold; guide me,
and lead me for your name's sake.

Take me out of the net that they have laid secretly for me, for you are my strength.

Into your hands I commend my spirit, for you have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

'My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies,
and from those who persecute me.

'Make your face to shine upon your servant, and save me for your mercy's sake.'

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,

without end. Amen

world

Scripture Reading Acts 7.55 to end

⁵⁶ 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' ⁵⁷ But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸ Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel John 14.1-14

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going.' ⁵ Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' ⁶ Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

⁸ Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' ⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can

you say, "Show us the Father"? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

at the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

The gospels do not come to us as abstract theory or notes on pieces of paper, these are testimonies from witnesses. These are the recollections of those who were there and who walked and talked and watched Jesus' ministry as Messiah, as the Christ unfold. But they are much more, for they are the attestations of those who decades later are, in essence, are wanting to say 'we remember Jesus said these things to us, and whilst we may have had doubts at the time, whilst we had many questions we still wanted to ask, we have seen that what Jesus said would be has come to fruition.

Almost certainly, when Jesus said to those gathered about him, and we remember this is all before the crucifixion and resurrection, "*Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.*", would have looked at each other, and thought personally, what planet is he on!

If not to each other, then in their own hearing, those gathered – Thomas the doubter, Philip the unsure, peter the let's go at it full speed before we think a moment, James and John – just bring it on – would have said things like 'I am not a preacher, I am not a healer, I can't pray, I don't have the theology, I have no resources to meet such big needs I see before me, I am not God – you are'.

John includes this all in his gospel as a testimony to what he, and every one of the disciples, have come to see as reality – in following Jesus' example, in being like him offering souls and bodies as living sacrifices, directed and empowered by the Spirit - the breath of God, they have seen much more happen; both individually, but much more so as the community of faith, as the body of Christ, as the church.

Stephen is the first to attest in his life, and death, that Jesus is both Messiah and also that his way is sure. 'There are many rooms in my Father's house and I go to prepare the way for you'. Stephen declares to all 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' Jesus has made it through into the presence of God, and more he is declared righteous, he is declared God's justice, he has the ear of the almighty on all matters, for he sits at the right hand of God!

Stephen is encouraged at what he sees, emboldened to follow the way of Jesus in this most desperate of moments. It was usual practice back in those days, and actually still is so throughout the Middle East, for those facing execution to call down curses, to spout vitriol on those taking your life. But Stephen, strengthened in the moment by seeing his way is open into God, follows his master and blesses his killers.

For the many, many followers of Jesus ever since who have been martyred, imprisoned, beaten, spat at and ridiculed for their faith, Stephen testifies to each and every one – Jesus is Messiah, Jesus has gone all the

way, and more he has opened the way for all.

Thankfully, it is not the calling of all disciples of Jesus to face martyrdom! But there is a call on each and all to offer our souls and bodies as 'living sacrifices' in each and every day to say 'Ok Lord what today, where today and give me the strength through your Spirit to bring glory to your name'.

Christianity is not a solo venture, it is and always will be about God and His people. It is always about 'God with us' and as one wise person put it the way of Christ is about 'expecting great things from God; and our attempting great things with God'. What will you attempt today with God? What great things will you ask of God today?

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers

We make our intercessions

Lord, as you call us to walk in your ways, guide us that we may do what you would have us do, that we, your church, may do greater things for the Father's glory.

Lord, lead us in the way of your peace, guide us in your path of life.

We pray for those in positions of authority, for all making difficult decisions this week for justice, peace and the marginalized in society. May we see the way to both prosper and live as human beings and to guard and bless the ecology of the world.

Lord, lead us in the way of your peace, guide us in your path of life.

We give you thanks for those who have enriched our lives, built and sustained our communities, those who give vision of a good future and a safe path on which to journey. We pray for our families and friends, for homes, hospitals, and all therein.

Lord, lead us in the way of your peace, guide us in your path of life.

We pray at this time for all who are confused about the truth, or about life, those known to us whose minds are disturbed, those who have lost their way. We pray for those who have no peace, and for those unwell in body, mind or spirit, especially

Lord, lead us in the way of your peace, guide us in your path of life.

Lord Christ, you have gone before us and prepared a place for us, lead us until we come fully into your kingdom and walk before you in that life which is eternal.

Lord, lead us in the way of your peace, guide us in your path of life.

The Collect

All: Risen Christ, your wounds declare your love for the world and the wonder of your risen life; give us compassion and courage to risk ourselves for those we serve, to the glory of God the father. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: 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, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.