

DORCHESTER UNITED CHURCH

Pentecost 25 November 12, 2023

WE GATHER IN GOD'S PRESENCE

Prelude

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we worship and reside on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee and the Anishnaabe people.

It is in the spirit of reconciliation and right relationships, and working towards this reality that we come to worship the One who will empower and guide us with grace.

Lighting the Christ Candle

Dark shadows have covered our world.

We light this candle as a sign against the darkness.

May our lives be renewed as we live in its glow.

Silent Reflection

Birthdays, Celebrations and the Life and Work of the Congregation

Call to Worship

The prophet says that the Day of Reckoning is upon us.

God's Holy Presence will always be with us.

The cry for justice is heard in the sanctuary.

The evil deeds of the powerful surround us on every side.

We shall not live in the darkness of hypocrisy.

We will renew the covenant with our God.

[adapted from Amos 5]

Hymn VU 30 Hail to the Lord's Anointed

Hail to the Lord's anointed,
great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free;
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity.

He comes with justice surely
to those who suffer wrong;
to help the poor and needy,
and bid the weak be strong;
to give them songs for sighing,
their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying,
are precious in his sight.

He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth;
love, joy, and hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains,
shall peace, the herald, go,
and righteousness, in fountains,
from hill to valley flow.

To him shall prayer unceasing
and daily vows ascend;
his kingdom still increasing,
a kingdom without end.
The tide of time shall never
his covenant remove;
his name shall stand forever;
that name to us is Love.

Opening Prayer

God of grace and mercy, we hear the cries for peace in our world. May we join our voices that those in power may listen and turn from their intransigence. Let peace live in our hearts and compassion find a place in our relationships with one another. Death has been too much

with us and we shrink from the sight of broken bodies. We remember all who suffer risk to bring peace to the war-torn places of our world. May we be willing to sacrifice our comfort, our lifestyle and even our reputation that justice may be done. We pray in the name of the Prince of Peace. Amen.

WE ARE BLESSED BY GOD

Time for the Young and the Young at Heart

The Prayer of Jesus [The 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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Scripture Readings

Psalm 63 VU 781 Sung Refrain1

Refrain: *"In the morning I will sing glad songs of praise to you."*

You are my God, I long for you from early morning.
My whole being desires you like a dry, worn, waterless land.
My soul thirsts for you,
**In the sanctuary let me see how mighty are your works;
Your constant love is better than life itself,
And so I will praise you.**

Refrain: *In the morning I will sing glad songs of praise to you.*

I will give thanks as long as I live;
I raise my hands in prayer.

**My soul will feast and be filled,
And I will sing and praise you.**

Refrain: *In the morning I will sing glad songs of praise to you.*

As I lie in bed, I remember you, O God;
I think of you all night long,
For you are my constant help.

**In the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
I cling to you; your hand keeps me safe.**

Refrain: *In the morning I will sing glad songs of praise to you.*

First Lesson Amos 5: 18-24

The Day of the Lord a Dark Day

¹⁸ Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!

 Why do you want the day of the Lord?

It is darkness, not light,

¹⁹ as if someone fled from a lion

 and was met by a bear

or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall

 and was bitten by a snake.

²⁰ Is not the day of the Lord darkness, not light,

 and gloom with no brightness in it?

²¹ I hate, I despise your festivals,

 and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²² Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,

 I will not accept them,

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals

 I will not look upon.

²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs;

 I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

²⁴ But let justice roll down like water

 and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Other Readings 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

The Coming of the Lord

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Matthew 25: 1-13

The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten young women took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷ Then all those young women got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Later the other young women came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' ¹³ Keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Hymn VU 701 What does the Lord Require of You

What does the Lord require of you?

What does the Lord require of you?

Justice, kindness,
walk humbly with your God.

To seek justice, and love kindness,
and walk humbly with your God.

Sermon “A Prophet Indicts His People”

Hymn VU 700 God of Freedom God of Justice

God of freedom God of justice,
You whose love is strong as death,
You who saw the dark of prison,
You who knew the price of faith:
Touch our world of sad oppression
With Your Spirit's healing breath.

Rid the earth of torture's terror,
You whose hands were nailed to wood;
Hear the cries of pain and protest,
You who shed the tears and blood:
Move in us the power of pity
Restless for the common good.

Make in us a captive conscience
Quick to hear, to act, to plead;
Make us truly sisters, brothers
Of whatever race or creed:
Teach us to be fully human,
Open to each other's need.

We Respond to God's Grace

Prayer of the People

Holy and Compassionate One, soften our hearts and open our arms that we may welcome those who have been caught in the web of cruelty. Show us how we can make our voices heard. May we not satisfy the demands of those in power even as the needs of the hurting stare us in the face every day.

Save us from offering our devotion, however weak, to cheap or easy religion while you, O God, call us to a harder path. Make us wise to discern the evil in our world. In the face of all that is deceptively evil, help us to choose the path that Jesus followed.

Bring unity to our divided and hurting world and peace in the wars of incursion. In the midst of the fear and confusion, the uncertainty and loss caused by natural disasters, provide a steady hope. Reconciling God, may past hurts be forgotten as we stretch out our hands to the needy. May we become agents of rest and relief, comfort, and healing to the injured and the dying.

God, we live in a brutal world where the strong exploit the weak and the powerful have unleashed a reign of terror on the powerless. As we listen to the litany of despair in places whose names are still unfamiliar to us, help us to find ways to lift their burdens and wipe away their tears. In the midst of hardship and challenge we are grateful for your presence with us in the darkness as in the light.

God of Justice, too often our worship is empty and hollow. As the prophet reminds us, we recite easy words and perform familiar rituals. We are afraid of speaking truth to the powerful. We are more concerned with seeking material wealth than with sharing what we have with others. We worry more about the physical condition of our homes than with the quality of family life within them. We find ourselves so exhausted by all we do that we cannot find the energy or the time to challenge the systems of oppression.

Source of our strength, be the wind beneath us as we lift our voice in thankful praise for all you have done to open our eyes to what is really happening in our world. Give us new eyes to probe beyond the hidden and deliberately opaque. As we face these new worlds of pain and suffering, help us to persevere in the quest for change and new life. Amen

Invitation to invest in God's Mission

The power of the Gospel lies in its ability to transcend the limitations of geographical space. The biblical narrative pushes beyond the boundaries of the Ancient Near East to our hometowns and those who share our worldview. The God of creation has the world in view when disciples were first sent into Judea and Samaria and the furthest reaches of the space-time continuum.

Offertory Hymn VU 538 For the Gift of Creation

For the gift of creation, the gift of your love,
And the gift of the Spirit by which we live,
We thank you and give you the fruit of our hands.
May your grace be proclaimed by the gifts that we give.

Prayer of Dedication

God of us all, some of us give with joy while others give out of duty. Some give out of their abundance, while others have little to give. Some give because they have seen the need and have been changed by what they have seen. These are our gifts, O God. Accept them, bless them, and send them to where the needs of others are greater than ours. Amen

Hymn VU 688 O Day of God, Draw Nigh

O Day of God, draw nigh
In beauty and in power,
Come with thy timeless judgment now
To match our present hour.

Bring to our troubled minds,
Uncertain and afraid,
The quiet of a steadfast faith,
Calm of a call obeyed.

Bring justice to our land,
That all may dwell secure,
And finely build for days to come
Foundations that endure.

Bring to our world of strife
Thy sovereign word of peace,
That war may haunt the earth no more
And desolation cease.

O Day of God, draw nigh
As at creation's birth;
Let there be light again, and set
Your judgments in the earth.

Commissioning and Benediction

And still the cry goes up for God to come.

We have been blessed with the gift of grace.

Let us use that gift to break the cycle of complacency.

We go in the power of a love that has freed us for service.

Closing Song Go Now in Peace

Go now in peace. Never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know He will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.

Postlude