

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Eternal Homecoming  
Fifth Sunday of Easter  
Revelation 21:1-8**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

Praise the Lord!

**Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise God in the heights!**

Praise God, all you angels; praise God, all creatures high and low!

**Rulers of the earth and all peoples, praise God's holy name!**

Young men and women alike, old and young together!

**With voices united, let us praise the Lord!**

**Prayer of Adoration**

Holy God,

the first and the last, beginning and end of all things,  
you are worthy of praise from all your creation.

Sun, moon, and stars praise you.

Earth, sea, and sky praise you.

Every living thing praises you in its own way.

And so we praise you in our human diversity,

joining our varied voices with all your creatures in heaven and on earth.

You fill our lives with the wonder of your love in Christ Jesus.

Your Spirit moves throughout the world

to reveal your purposes for every living thing.

Receive our prayers and praise this day,

for you are the Source of our life and our hope,

Holy God, ever Three and Ever One.

**Opening Hymn # 438: “When Morning Gilds the Skies” (V 1, 4)**

When morning gilds the skies,  
 My heart awaking cries:  
 May Jesus Christ be praised!  
 Alike at work and prayer  
 To Jesus I repair:  
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

Be this, while life is mine,  
 My canticle divine,  
 May Jesus Christ be praised!  
 Be this the eternal song  
 Through all the ages on,  
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**

**Loving God,  
 Jesus commanded us to love one another  
 so the world would know we follow him.  
 Yet we confess we do not always love one another,  
 not the way Jesus loves us.  
 The world has seen our squabbling,  
 our history of hypocrisy,  
 and our lack of compassion for those who don't measure up.  
 Loving God, forgive us.  
 Lord Jesus, continue to love us.  
 Holy Spirit, fill us with love,  
 so that the world will witness your love in our words and actions. Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus,  
 we are assured that there is no sin so terrible  
 that God cannot forgive,  
 no hurt so terrible that God cannot heal.  
 God accepts, God forgives, and God sets free.  
 Receive the forgiving love of God.

### **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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
 And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the Evil One.  
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Responsive Reading**

#### **Question 32. How did God keep these promises?**

God led the people out of exile and brought them back to their own land. A suffering and persecuted people, they looked for the coming of God's anointed one, the Messiah, to restore and renew their life and hope. His coming would continue the story of salvation, which began in creation and unfolded throughout Israel's history. The Promised One would fulfil the covenant and begin a new chapter in the story of salvation.

Ezek 37:14, Isa 11:1-4, Heb 8:6

#### **Question 33. Whom did God send as Messiah?**

God sent his only Son, Jesus of Nazareth, to be the Messiah, or Christ (both words mean 'anointed one'), the fulfilment of God's promise to Israel. He is the one promised by God, anointed to save us from sin and death.

Mt 1:16, Jn 1:41, Jn 3:17

### **Music Ministry: "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less" by Choir**

### **Prayer for illumination**

Almighty, gracious Father, the true understanding of your holy Word helps us to grow into the fulness of the salvation you so freely offer in Christ. Grant to all of us that our hearts, being freed from worldly affairs, may hear and grasp your holy Word with all diligence and faith, that we may rightly understand your gracious will, cherish it, and live by it with all earnestness, to your praise and honor. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### **Scripture**

#### **Revelation 21:1-8**

### The New Heaven and the New Earth

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

<sup>5</sup> And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup> And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. <sup>7</sup> The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup> But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

### Children's Hymn # 421: "Rejoice in the Lord"

Rejoice in the Lord always,  
and again I say, Rejoice!  
Rejoice in the Lord always,  
and again I say, Rejoice!  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
and again I say, Rejoice!  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
and again I say, Rejoice!

### Children's Lesson

### Sermon

Did you know that J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of the Lord of the Rings was a devout catholic boy? And it is because of this that throughout his writings we can find many themes of the Christian Faith. Perhaps that is part of the reason these books and films appeal to people on so many levels.

In his book The Hobbit, we are presented with the story of a group of dwarven warriors who lost their home after the attack of a terrible dragon. This seems like a fanciful story,

but this story does share a theme with the Christian faith. These dwarves have lost their mountain kingdom, a true wonder of the world in which they lived and a place where they had unending happiness and wealth. They dwelt in splendor, surrounded by the gold and gems they love, and now that paradise had been lost into the arms of the dragon, and the whole dwarven nation is forced to wander the world in shame and poverty. Much in the same way that man has been forced to wander this world since the fall of Adam and Eve and their exile from the Garden of Eden where they lived with everything they could desire at their fingertips.

The similarities do not end there, Thorin Oakenshield, the dwarven leader gets into a conversation with his uncle about the futility of trying to return to the mountain kingdom. His uncle reminds Thorin that the dwarves are no longer the people under the mountain, but instead now they are merchants, toymakers, miners, and tinkers, the dwarven nation has become people of the surface world. The same is true for mankind, we once walked in the Garden of Eden, created in the image of God, and now we are businessmen, teachers, plumbers, electricians, and farmers, no longer the people of Heaven but now people of this world. In the same way that the dragon had taken away the glory of the dwarves, sin swept in and took away mankind's glory when sin forced us out of the Garden of Eden. Many Christians can relate to Thorin who desires to return to the mountains, as Christians we too long to return to our home, to God's kingdom.

In *The Hobbit*, the dwarves pass through many trials and challenges, and in the tale, they do manage to return to their kingdom under the mountains. The same is true for Christians, the book of Revelation teaches us that all who are faithful followers of Jesus will eventually walk in God's kingdom, the remade Garden of Eden, regardless of all of the trials, troubles, and tribulations that they go through here on earth.

The book of Revelation directs us to look both backwards and forwards, back to Jesus's death upon the cross where he freed us through his blood by paying the debt of our sins and forward to the return of Christ and then our life in his eternal kingdom. The book of Revelation solves the problems created by the sin of Adam and Eve and their ejection from the Garden of Eden in the book of Genesis by presenting for mankind a new home for God's faithful, the holy city, the New Jerusalem.

We need to understand that this new home for all God's Faithful is not a completely new creation. After defeating Satan and sending him off to eternity in the Lake of Fire, after all the enemies of God have been their justice, Christ will bring those who are the children of God into their eternal home.

Jesus says that He will make all things new, not all new things. He is not going to recreate the universe, instead he will renew what has been made. God through his divine power and wisdom does not start fresh but instead he removes all of the sin of man that was brought about by Adam's original sin. He will regenerate the world, very much in the same

way that we are regenerated from our sinful nature when the Holy Spirit enters us when we come to faith and allows us to begin the work of sanctification, to begin to resist the temptations of sin. The world will die from this life, and it will be reborn in Christ, just as we are 'made new' in our baptism into Christ through the Holy Spirit.

We also are told that there will be no sea in our eternal home, which means there will be no evil in the world. The seas are a symbol of evil in the book of Revelation and indeed in much of the Bible.

To the people of Ancient Israel, the sea was a dangerous place, there are no famous Israelite sailors, or naval heroes of any kind, with the exception of Noah and that was a pretty unique case. To the Israelites the sea was a place of Chaos and destruction, they dislike sea travel because they feared a death at sea would mean that their body was lost and could not be prepared for eternal life. In the earlier chapters of Revelation, we are told that Satan stood on the sand of the sea where he called forth his beast in chapter 13. In chapters 17-20 we are told of the defeat and removal of the dragon, his beasts, the harlot, and all of the other evils that exist in the world, until finally we see the removal of the sea itself, the removal of the place from which evil is birthed. We will live in a world where evil does not exist, where sin does not exist. We step out from the darkness in this life into the eternal light of God's glory, a world where even the temptation of sin does not exist.

And it is in this sinless world that the New Jerusalem is created. In Jewish history Jerusalem is the center of their world. The destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in the Old Testament creates the time in which the Israelites are exiled and mistreated by the world until the story of Esther, where God's unseen hand creates a way for them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the Temple. The temple also plays a central role in our justification; it is the place where our Lord is crucified and once again the Temple is destroyed in the year 70 A.D. with the Israelites again exiled and dispersed around the globe. It will be rebuilt a third time in the book of Revelation, and it is shown as a sign of the ushering in of the Tribulation, the time where Satan rules over the world and Christians are sent into hiding. And it appears here for the fourth time at the end of the book of Revelation, where we see it renewed, regenerated, redeemed by God for his people.

It becomes the Holy city that it was always meant to be, completely free of all of the sin and corruption that is typically found in a city of this world, however, it will be so much greater than just a place free of the negativity of sin. It will be a city filled with all of the attributes of God. Filled with his power, his might, his glory, and his love, his justice, and his righteousness. A place of positivity where God's majesty is on display for all who He has brought to live with Him in this eternal city.

We will live in this Holy city as the people of God. This city is not one that is defined by any of our worldly attributes, not by wealth, influence, or entertainment. It is a city

defined by its people, the children of God. In the New Jerusalem we will gather in praise and worship of God, not just as brothers and sisters in Christ as we do here on Earth in this Church, but instead with God in his Kingdom in the presence of his Glory everywhere we go.

It will be a place where we will feel God's eternal love. Many people struggle with the idea of love in this world, we seek it out and God designed marriage to represent love. However, here on Earth, love is still flawed by our own sinful nature. In the New Jerusalem it will be a perfect love, one where we will enjoy the bliss of that eternal love of God that is shared with us. We are able to enter into this city because of God's love, because of his death upon the cross and his blood which washed away the debt of our sins and makes our garments clean.

This all fulfils the prophecies in the book of Isaiah.

**Isaiah 65:17-19**

**<sup>17</sup> "For behold, I create new heavens  
and a new earth,  
and the former things shall not be remembered  
or come into mind.**

**<sup>18</sup> But be glad and rejoice forever  
in that which I create;  
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,  
and her people to be a gladness.**

**<sup>19</sup> I will rejoice in Jerusalem  
and be glad in my people;  
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping  
and the cry of distress.**

Isaiah wrote about the New Jerusalem and included the truth that we see repeated in the Book of Revelation, it will be a city where there are no more weeping, no more crying, no more pain, and no more disease. There will be no more death, no suffering, only this eternal love of God. The world we live in now is nothing like this, we live in a world where we are constantly assaulted by the enemies of God, sin is ever present in our life, temptation presents itself in a new way over and over again, trying to get us to turn away from Christ. Sorrow, pain, loss are all consequences of our sinful nature. When God removes the sea from the New Earth, he removes the source of all sin that exist in this world in which we live.

Death shall be no more! This is something which has struck me more and more as I get older, when we are young, we think we are immortal, that we will live forever, time passes slowly. Yet as we get older the truth of death sets in upon us, we are reminded of our own mortality and the seasons, and the years seem to pass faster and faster. Our children grow up, our relationships change and the things which we valued in this life begin to move on.

This is a truth we all need to know and accept; time waits for no one, and death will come for us all. But we are destined for an age where we will no longer be subject to mortality, a place where there is no death, no pain, no sorrow, and we should find some hope and joy in this Revelation. Psalm 116 tells us that:

**Psalm 116:8-9**

**<sup>8</sup> For you have delivered my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears,  
my feet from stumbling;  
<sup>9</sup> I will walk before the LORD  
in the land of the living.**

We are living now in the land of the dying, and we will be given over into the land of the living after the day of judgement. All of the sorrow we experience, all of the tribulations and troubles of this life, all the things which caused us pain in this life will be forgotten. God will be with us and in his eternal love we will be filled with gladness and joy.

It is God's own hand that will wipe away our tears. As we pass from this world into the next, our Lord will meet us and remove the pain from our lives, he will wipe away the tears we have shed, externally and internally. The pains we have shared with the world and the ones we have carried internally throughout our lives. God's hand will reach out and remove all of these from us with His caring touch. Even in this world God reaches out to comfort us, to strengthen us, when we are in trials and tribulations, he gives us the strength and perseverance to endure the things of this world, and that is just a glimpse of the eternal comfort we will have in his Kingdom as God will be living with us.

Yes, it is true that God will live with us in the New Jerusalem. God's voice booms out in John's vision, telling him that God and man will dwell together. He will be with us; he will be in our presence, and we will bask in his love everywhere we go and in everything we do. The scripture says that the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with us. God has always had a tabernacle among us, a place where God and man can meet together. In the Old Testament it was a tent that was carried around with the tribes of Israel as they moved around the land. Eventually it became the Temple that was built in Jerusalem, it is now our hearts, after the coming of Christ we can tabernacle with God directly through the Holy Spirit which lives in each of us. In the end of times His tabernacle will surround us, and we will be with God at all times and in all we think, say, and do.

God promised Moses an eternal tabernacle, an everlasting covenant, one where his people would be the people of God and God would be their God. God has always fulfilled his part of that promise, either in a tent or a building, even when the people have not. Jesus fulfilled this promise for a short time when the word became flesh and walked among us. But it is here in the final chapters of Revelation that we see it fulfilled



for all of eternity, the covenant that began in the book of Genesis is fulfilled and God is indeed living among his people who will come from all tribes, people and languages fulfilling all of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

And when God speaks in today's scripture, He sets out His truths. Truths which are critical for all Christians throughout to know and understand throughout all of human history. In John's Day it was a truth that they needed to hear because they were living under the persecution of the Roman Empire. Many faithful Christians have already been martyred by the time John penned this book and in the coming centuries many, many more Christians will die for their faith. In the world today there are Christians in the world who are persecuted, imprisoned and at times murdered or even legally executed because of their belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. And in the future, especially as we approach the times of tribulation, the persecution of Christians and Christian faith will become more and more acceptable by society.

What Jon has written are indeed Gods words, even though they are penned by man. The whole Bible is the word of God, His Truths, His infallible word meant to help Christians as they pass through this world on their journey to the New Jerusalem. And God says:

'It is done'

God is here at the end of the ages telling John that it is done, declaring that his plan has finally come to fruition. In the Greek it translates as 'everything has happened.' Gods plan for judgement and salvation has come to its conclusion, all of the uncertainties of this world have been replaced by Gods eternal presence for Christians. Unlike in this life where we can only guarantee death, in the New Jerusalem we can be assured of everything, there is no chaos or confusion, there are no temptations or evils only Eternal joy and fulfillment and happiness in God's eternal presence.

God echoes the words of Christ on the cross who proclaimed 'It is finished' when he atoned for our sins on the cross and began the process of salvation for his followers. He echoes the words of the Angel who poured out the seven bowls of wrath upon the world who proclaimed 'It is done' as he poured out the last bowl on the world and ended the reign of sin on the world. 'Everything has happened' all of the world's history is already written by God and here it ends. Christs death provided us with the grounds of our salvation, Gods judgement of sin provided us with the context of our need for salvation and here at the end of everything God declares the arrival of our salvation, a world in which he makes all things new so he and man can live together for all of eternity.

God then reminds us of his sovereignty as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning, and the end. The one who created, who sustains and oversees all of creation. God knows the end because he started the world on this path and his divine providence has been at work in every moment of human history ensuring that the world will conclude exactly as

he intends. God's word is indeed truth as only He can know because He is the unchangeable one, the one who is and was and is to come. And it is for this reason that Christians can place their absolute trust in the sovereignty of his word over the teachings of this world.

Throughout all of Human history mankind has sought to make the perfect world and failed. Mankind has tried to create utopia over and over through all kinds of theories and methods; education, legislation, peace programs, social, political, and economic theories and every attempt has failed. Utopia can never exist on this planet, ultimately it will always fail because of the corruption of sin which exists in all of mankind. God alone is the one who can make utopia, God alone is the one who can renew all through the Holy Spirit. This is what he does in the hearts of believers, and this is what he will do with the entirety of creating at the end of the ages.

In this New Jerusalem we will have everything we need to have eternal life. It will be our utopia; the living waters will meet all of our physical needs and there will no longer be need for people to compete with one another for limited resources as we do now. All who live there will be physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually at peace.

Finally, God speaks and tells John and all of us who it is that gets to enjoy life in His utopia. The entry requirement is simple, believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Through Jesus, God has provided everything that we need to have eternal life: mercy, grace, pardon, peace, and perseverance. There are no requirements in terms of good works, there is no amount of our time or our money we need to contribute to the church, there are no rituals or practices that we are required to perform. We simply need to thirst for the spiritual life that God offers to all of freely out of His grace, love, and mercy.

People who thirst for Christ will enter God's eternal Kingdom and know God personally. He will be their Father, a Father who holds his children close to his heart and delights in their company. The truth is that earthly fathers all fail in some way, none of us is perfect, in God we will have a perfect heavenly father. One who is filled with a rich and deep love which will be the inheritance of all of God's Children through their faith in Jesus Christ. We become co-Heirs with Jesus Christ, living with a God who will fulfill all of our needs for eternity in a Kingdom where there exists no pain, sorrow suffering or sin. Brought into his kingdom through our resistance of the temptation of sin and worldly ways, not by our own power, strength or will, but by the strength, perseverance, and grace that Jesus Christ grants each of us through the works of the Holy Spirit while we dwell here on Earth.

**Rev 21:8**

**<sup>8</sup>But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."**

Those who thirst for the ways of man, for sin, will have according to the truth of God a very different eternity. While those who thirst for salvation will experience God's grace and his eternal glory. Those people who thirst for the pleasures of sin, pleasures of the world, those who actively choose to rebel against the truth of God's word will not take part in the inheritance of heaven, instead they will experience an inheritance of condemnation, an entirety of the lake of fire.

Revelation describes these people in two basic groups. The first group being those people who may have believed in Christ, at least superficially, in their lives. The people who knew of Christ, knew of the truth in God's Holy Word and then for their own reasons, personal or societal, chose to give into the pressures of the world and give into its ways and its acceptance of sin.

The cowardly and faithless are not the Christians who struggle to believe in Christ, instead they are the ones who betray their faith when faced with the pressures of the world in which we live to conform to worldly ways. These are the rootless ones from the Parable of the Sower, they grow for a while in Christ, but eventually when they are feeling a little persecuted because of their faith, or maybe they feel the need to justify a sin they take pleasure in, and they fall away from obeying God's word and begin conform to the way of the world. These are not Christians who lose their salvation, know this people that once you have salvation it cannot be lost, these are people who never really found salvation, they never really had true faith. They are the ones who Jesus speaks of in the book of Matthew when he says that.

**Matthew 7: 21-23**

**<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'**

'I never knew you.'

To these people the detestable are added, those who partake in the perverse practices of the harlot Babylon. The apostates, the people who turn from Christ and actively seek to destroy faith in others.

Then there is the second group, sinners who define their life by the ways of this world, **'murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars.'** People who refuse to come to faith in Christ because it would force them to deny themselves the pleasures of this world. For these two groups of people there is no salvation, there is only an eternity in the Lake of Fire, eternally removed from the glory, grace and love of God.

This does not make a claim that Christians have never sinned or even that once they become faithful followers of Christ that they are instantly devoid of the desire and temptation of sin. We are all sinners, but when we place our faith and trust in Jesus, when we thirst for salvation, the Holy Spirit begins its work in us, renewing us, making us new and changing us, making it more difficult to partake in the pleasures of the world that distract us from God.

Christians have been guilty of all forms of sin, but their salvation has been bought and paid for by the blood of Christ on the cross and through their faith a ticket to their eternal home in the New Jerusalem.

Remember these brothers and sisters, there may be many things in this world that trouble us, there may be many things in this world which distract us, there may be many things in the world which tempt or torment us. Find comfort in knowing this, that while we might experience, pain, sorrow, suffering and sin while we pass through our time on earth, we will eventually have eternal life where all of our needs are met by our Father in his eternal kingdom.

Let us pray,

**Hold on to this Comfort in All Trials and Temptations**

Lord God, heavenly Father,  
 through your Son  
 you promised us your Holy Spirit,  
 that he will convict the world of sin,  
 of righteousness and of judgment.  
 Enlighten our hearts,  
 that we may confess our sins,  
 obtain eternal righteousness through faith in Christ,  
 and hold on to this comfort  
 in all our trials and temptations,  
 that Christ is Lord over the devil and death and all things  
 and that he will graciously deliver us  
 out of all our afflictions  
 and make us partakers of eternal salvation;  
 through your Son,  
 Jesus Christ our Lord,  
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
 one true God, now and forever.

***Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Easter 4, Cantate***

**Music Ministry: “In Times Like These” by Susan Parsons**

**Invitation to Offering**

**Offering**

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

**E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. [standrewspert offering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewspert offering@gmail.com) If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.**

**Offertory Prayer**

O Lord our God, the author and giver of all good things,  
 we thank you for all your mercies,  
 and for your loving care over all your creatures.  
 We bless you for the gift of life, for your protection round about us,  
 for your guiding hand upon us,  
 and for the tokens of your love within us.  
 In all these things, O heavenly God,  
 make us wise for a right use of your benefits,  
 that we may render an acceptable thanksgiving unto you  
 all the days of our lives,  
 through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

**Closing Hymn # 479: “The Church’s One Foundation (V 1, 5)**

The Church's one foundation  
 is Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
 we are his new creation  
 by water and the Word.  
 From heav'n he came and sought us  
 that we might ever be;  
 his living servant people,  
 by his own death set free.

We now on earth have union  
 with God the ThreeinOne,  
 and share, through faith, communion  
 with those whose rest is won,  
 O happy ones and holy!  
 Lord, give us grace that we,  
 like them, the meek and lowly,  
 on high may dwell with thee.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Lord our God,  
 you have given us so many wonders in this world you created.  
 We thank you for spring sunshine and refreshing rain;  
 for colours exploding in blossoms opening,  
 grass greening, and gardens sprouting.  
 Thank you for all the signs of new life around us  
 Make the earth fruitful in this growing season,  
 so that food will be plentiful for the hungry.

God of the small and insignificant as well as powerful and influential,  
 we thank you for our families and friends  
 who offer us love and encouragement as we move through life.  
 We pray for those families and communities  
 whose lives have been disrupted by war and conflict,  
 who worry about safety each day  
 and what the future will hold for them.  
 Guide all those with decision making power  
 to consider the lives of the vulnerable as very precious,  
 and make policies that protect the future for them.

God of the vulnerable,  
 we pray for all those whose future is uncertain:  
 for those are facing illness or waiting for treatment,  
 for those mourning the loss of someone dear,  
 and those who feel lonely or discouraged.  
 We pray for those who are homeless or unemployed,  
 for all who know hunger or despair,  
 and for those facing danger or discrimination every day.  
 Empower us with your Spirit to reach out to those in need,  
 in this community and in places distant from us,  
 so that we can make your love tangible in their lives  
 in Jesus' name.

God of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
We thank you for this community that gathers in Jesus' name,  
for the warmth and welcome offered here,  
for friendship and faithfulness discovered,  
for learning and leadership shared with each other.  
Thank you for the hope that rises in us  
through the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ.  
Make us expressions of that hope to each other  
and to the world you love for his sake,  
as we join our voices with his followers around the world,  
in prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit as the One True God,  
now and forever. Amen.

### **Benediction**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.