

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Cornerstone  
Fifth Sunday of Easter  
1 Peter 2:1-10**

**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 and Invocation**

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 #333: "I Sing the Almighty Power of God"**

I sing the almighty power of God

that made the mountains rise,

that spread the flowing seas abroad

and built the lofty skies.  
 I sing the wisdom that ordained  
 the sun to rule the day;  
 the moon shines full at Gods command,  
 and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord,  
 that filled the earth with food;  
 God formed the creatures with a word,  
 and then pronounced them good.  
 Lord, how thy wonders are displayed,  
 where'er I turn my eyes,  
 if I survey the ground I tread,  
 or gaze upon the skies!

There's not a plant or flower below  
 but makes thy glories known,  
 and clouds arise and tempests blow  
 by order from thy throne,  
 while all that borrows life from thee  
 is ever in thy care,  
 and everywhere I could be,  
 thou, God, art present there.

### **Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
 Let us make our confession to God.

### **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.**

### Music Ministry: "As We Break the Bread" Choir

### Responsive Reading

#### Psalm 31:14-18

14 But I trust in you, O LORD;  
I say, "You are my God."

**15 My times are in your hand;  
rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!**

**16 Make your face shine on your servant;  
save me in your steadfast love!**

17 O LORD, let me not be put to shame,  
for I call upon you;  
let the wicked be put to shame;  
let them go silently to Sheol.

**18 Let the lying lips be mute,  
which speak insolently against the righteous  
in pride and contempt.**

### Children's Hymn: "I'm in the Lord's Army"

I may never march in the infantry, ride in the cavalry, shoot the artillery  
I may never zoom o'er the enemy but I'm in the Lord's army.

I'm in the Lord's army. I'm in the Lord's army.

I may never march in the infantry, ride in the cavalry, shoot the artillery,  
I may never zoon o'er the enemy but I'm in the Lord's army.

## Children's Lesson

### Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

#### Scripture

##### 1 Peter 2:1-10

**2** So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. **2** Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— **3** if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

**4** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

**7** So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,  
“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”

**8** and

“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

**9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

#### Sermon

Put away, put aside, take off; such simple words to describe what is usually a much more difficult act. Peter is telling us all to put aside our old self and to take up the new self as if we were simple taking off a dirty shirt and putting on a clean one.

This is how Paul referenced in Colossians and James referred to it in his writings. When you become a true Christian, you are taking off the old and putting on the new.

The early Christian Church knew this, they made it part of the baptismal process. When someone arrived to be baptised, they would remove their clothing and be given a pure white baptismal robe that the church supplied to them, clean white garments to leave the church in, signifying the clean life that they were now called to walk in Jesus Christ after taking off their old, dirty, sinful life.

Peter is telling the faithful to remember this, remember that we are called to put away all our old sins when we begin our walk in Christ. We are to put away all those things which interfere in our faith and tempt us away from God.

Notice that the things that Peter speaks of are all internal, '**malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander**' all things that live inside each of us.

Malice means wickedness. Mans desire to do bad things, things which go against the goodness that God has called for us to have in our lives. We often use this word in the modern world to describe when someone has the desire to intentionally do harm to, or hurt someone whether that be physically, emotionally, socially, or even economically. People who possess malice are also people who often do not care when others are hurt in these ways.

Guile is falsehood, or deceit. In John 1:47

**John 1:47**

**47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"**

Nathaniel is described as a man without deceit, a man without guile, a man who spoke the truth. Guile is the desire to say what is needed to make people like us, or agree with us, or favour us in some way. To be without Guile is to speak the truth, even if it brings us harm in some way.

Hypocrisy means pretending to be or claiming to be something which you are not. This is rampant in our world, where social media promotes these images of the perfect life, where people photoshop looks and fake backgrounds and put on fake smiles for the camera. However, it also goes much deeper than that in the church, it is a movement that teaches false doctrine under the premise of being the truth of God. It is churches who claim that there is more than one way to God, or every follower of God will have a happy, healthy, and comfortable life, Churches who teach that God Loves you just as you are and that any change in your behavior or character is not necessary, all teachings which go against what is said in the Bible. All false worldly teaching promoted by false prophets more interested in their own well being, than the Word of God.

Hypocrisy is usually driven by envy. Envy of worldly power, worldly wealth, worldly fame, worldly influence, or any of the other false idols that man has created. This desire to have the things of this world more, the desire of the flesh outweighing the desire to be obedient to God. Envy and guile often partner themselves together and create the hypocritical church that speaks of salvation but in truth offers none.

And from the heart that has embraced hypocrisy, guile and envy comes slander. The desire to destroy the reputation, the popularity, the very being of anyone who they perceive as being more fortunate, more powerful, smarter, better looking. The desire to remove the competition

for the things that they desire in any way they can. This is the root of the cancel culture that is prevalent in today's culture, this is the root of the whole -phobe movement that is active in today's world. If you do not join us in our hypocrisy, we will label you a -phobe and destroy you that way.

Slander is evident in the hearts of people who have given into all of the other sins of the flesh, it becomes their way of life to lash out in anger and hatred rather than in the love that Christ calls for all of his people to have, even for their enemies.

Remember 1 Peter 1:22-23

**1 Peter 1:22-23**

**22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God**

Christians have been born again! And it is because of that re-birth that we are to live with brotherly love for all of mankind, a supernatural love that even extends to those people who seek to cause us hurt and harm, like we said last week.

Peter is telling the faithful that they are to put away, put aside or take off all those aspects of our former life and live in the love of Christ. When we did not have God, we did not even notice our shirt was dirty, but now that we have God, we recognize our sins and we are called to recognize them and put them out of our lives as we replace those sinful ways with Christ like love, in the same way we take off a solid shirt and put on a clean one.

How can we do this?

Peter tells us in the next verses.

**1 Peter 2:2-3**

**2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.**

We put away all the thing which interfere with the Gospel in our lives. We stop doing the things which interfere with us learning about God in our lives. We become like a newborn, one who is dependant upon their mother for the very milk of life that sustains them and allows them to grow.

This is an immensely powerful image for anyone who knows about babies, motherhood, and milk. When a baby is first born the first milk it drinks is extremely high in nutrients and immunities, it is called colostrum. This 'first milk' is essential to the well being of a newborn child. Peter is telling Christians that the Word of God is like that 'first milk' it is filled with the nutrients that they will need for life and well as the protection that they will need in this fallen

world. For Christians it is the Word of God that helps to give us a spiritual immunity from the things which would take us away from God, it is the Word of God that helps us combat against, **'malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.'**

Peter is telling the faithful to go back to the Word of God like a newborn, be seeking it out and make it your primary source of spiritual nutrition. Do not just accept it second hand from anyone, be in the Word yourself so that you will recognize when people are falsely using the Word of God to lead you astray. Also, he reminds us that it is through returning to this 'first milk,' the Word of God, that we will in fact develop and strengthen our relationship with God.

**'If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good,'** If you have a relationship with God, you will know his Salvation and the value that has for all of eternity. If you are born again and have tasted that 'first milk' you will see the false, nature of this world and how it leads people astray into lives which have no meaning. Once you have a relationship with God, the things of this world fade in their importance and you begin to put away the things that use to seem so important to you as you begin to take up the things that are of importance to God.

Peter then reminds us that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of our salvation. Whenever anything is built out of stone, whenever a stone house is built, whenever a stone wall is built, it always starts with a single stone, the foundational rock upon which everything else is built. Once that first stone is laid, every stone, regardless of its shape, size, or color, whether it is laid next or thousands of stones later it is still resting upon and dependant upon that very first stone. Jesus is that stone, Jesus is both the cornerstone and the builder of His church.

Jesus is the living stone, it was through his death and resurrection and through his calling of his people, those who have tasted the 'first milk' that his church is built. It is built with people of all different shapes, sizes, and colors, they are all varied in many ways, but they are all solely dependant on Him as the cornerstone of their salvation.

Through the Holy Spirit we all become living stones which are then used by God in the construction of His Church. We are living stones, each called to take part in the construction of the church. As Paul told us in Romans:

**Romans 12:1**

**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**

We are living sacrifices, people who have put away their old selves to be used by God. Every one of us different, different in the way we look, the way we speak, the way we think, different in the skills, and gifts and talents in which God has given us, but each a critical part of the church which God is building, each one laid together with the other stones in His church unified by our dependence on Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.

**1 Peter 2:4-5**

**4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

We all are part of God's royal priesthood; we all are called to serve God in his spiritual house. God has cleansed his people and anointed them, so that they can offer up themselves as an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord in their lives.

John MacArthur said it this way.

**"God-honoring spiritual sacrifice begins when believers offer God all their human faculties, including their minds and every part of their bodies. The unregenerate yield the members of their bodies to sin, but the redeemed yield their members as instruments of righteousness"**

**- J. MacArthur**

We serve Christ alone as he is the foundational stone of our belief. He is the place from which we draw all our understanding of this world. God's Word is foundational in the church and that is what Peter is telling believers as he continues.

**1 Peter 2:6**

**6 For it stands in Scripture:**

**"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."**

Peter is quoting directly from the book of Isaiah.

**Isaiah 28:16**

**therefore thus says the Lord GOD,**

**"Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion,  
a stone, a tested stone,  
a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation:  
'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'**

Christ was a living stone rejected by men. Yet we see that Jesus was both a 'chosen' and 'precious' stone picked by God. Christ is unparalleled in his value; he is our precious Lord and Saviour. He is the one who purchased us with his own blood so that we could be freed from the sins of our previous life and brought back into relationship with God.

He is the cornerstone of the Church, without Christ the church has no foundation, no structure, and no strength. Without Christ the whole structure is wrong. Jesus is the cornerstone, the firm foundation upon which all of the church is built.



And with Christ as the cornerstone believers cannot be put to shame. The world may disagree with true believers, the world may ridicule them, may call them names like prudes or -phobes. The world might do them harm or hurt, financially, socially, emotionally or in other ways. However, even though the world might be against them, they will stand with righteous in Christ and in the kingdom of God, not with the shame and sorrow of a sinner. Jesus is our cornerstone, and all of our faith should be resting upon him and his teachings in the Scripture.

**1 Peter 2:7-8**

**7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,**

**“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”**

**8 and**

**“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”**

**They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.**

You will find as a Christian, especially in the world today, that many people will reject Christianity based on the church. It is common to hear people say that they are ‘spiritual and not religious’ in the modern world. They are rejecting the cornerstone of the church because they do not have their foundation in Christ. They are looking at the worldly hypocrites who call themselves Christian and believing that they represent God without going to the foundation to verify the truth.

Isn't it ironic that the foundational stone of the church also becomes the same block on which many people stumble? They want to believe in the false image of God that is presented because when they go back to the foundational Scripture it does not agree with the Jesus that they have built in their minds and to their liking.

There will be people in this world who will reject the church, reject the gospel, and reject Christ simply because of their own pride. People who believe that God is a crutch, or a refusal to believe in a God that would send people to Hell, or a God that would not allow suffering, or whatever other excuse they can think of to somehow separate the God that they believe in from the God of the Scripture.

Whatever reason and justification that non-believers use for not trusting in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and making Him the cornerstone of their life does not matter. The truth is that it is the lack of the Holy Spirit, which is the reason they stumble, because they live a life disobedient to God's Word.

**1 Corinthians 1:18**

**<sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

For those who have the Holy Spirit, God's word is their 'first milk', but to anyone who does not have the spirit it is simply spoiled milk. For those who recognize Christ as the cornerstone and base their life off his Word, Peter has more to teach.

**1 Peter 2:9-10**

**9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

Once again Peter is going to the Old Testament.

**Deuteronomy 7:6-9**

**6 "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.**

Every term that Peter uses to describe Christians was a term that was used to describe the people of Israel, 'a chosen race,' 'a royal priesthood,' 'a holy nation.' The gentiles have been invited into the family of God. People who have been called out from the rest of the world as citizens of Heaven, people who are to be set apart as they put away their old ways and live a Christ-like life.

Peter is reminding Christians that they have been chosen by God. God's people have been designated by God to live their lives in service to him, as they serve him in this world as living sacrifices, using the skills, time, talents, and treasures to proclaim his kingdom in this world.

Christians are called to be different, to be citizens of heaven in this world. Christians are called to be the ones who willfully proclaim the truth of God in a world that does not want to believe in the way that they think, the way that they speak and in everything they do. Christians are called to be strange, people who speak about the truth of repenting and believing in Christ, in putting away the sins of the flesh and picking up the love of God in this self-centered world.

Christians are a Holy Nation. A people who have been made clean by the blood of Christ, people who are called to be set apart from the ways of this world. This is our purpose in life, not to get wealthy, not to be famous or powerful, our call is to live a life that proclaims the truth of who God is in our lives. Christians are the Salt and Light in this world, so that those who are still

trapped in the darkness, still wearing their solid shirt can have their eyes opened and become aware of the sins of the flesh and the salvation that is found in Christ alone.

It is by God's mercy and by God's grace that we have been made into his people. '**A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**' A people who are strange, set apart from the ways of the world and it is our duty to proclaim the truth of our cornerstone in Christ to the world, to non-believers and false believers, to stand as Salt and Light in the dark. To share the truth of His salvation to all who are lost in the world as we all once were in every aspect of our lives.

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: Viet Dietrich, d. 1549, Easter 4, Cantate***

**Hymn: "Ancient Words"**

Holy Words long preserved for our walk in this world  
 They resound with God's own hear, O let the ancient words impart.

Words of life, words of hope, give us strength, help us cope  
 In this world wher-e'er we roam, ancient words will guide us home.

Refrain

Ancient words, ever true, changing me, changing you  
We have come with open hearts, O let the ancient words impart.

Holy words of our faith handed down to this age  
came to us through sacrifice, O heed the faithful words of Christ. (Refrain)

Martyrs blood stains each page, they have died for this faith  
Hear them cry through the years, Heed these words and hold them dear. (Refrain)

## Communion

### Invitation to the Table

This is the joyful feast of the people of God!  
They will come from east and west, and from north and south,  
and sit at table in the kingdom of God.  
This is the table not of one denomination, but of our one Lord Jesus Christ.  
It is made ready for those who love him  
and those who want to love him more.  
So come, you who have much faith and you who have little,  
you who have been here often  
and you who have not been for a long time.  
Our Saviour invites all those who trust him  
to share the feast which he has prepared.

### The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you;  
**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts;  
**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God;  
**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three,  
You are source of all that exists.  
You are beyond the galaxies, deeper than the oceans;  
You pour down rain and bring forth the fruit of the earth.  
You carry us through deep waters and hold us in the darkest night.  
So with all your creatures, great and small,  
with angels and archangels, with saints and servants in every generation  
we join in the rejoicing of your creation:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
 Hosanna in the highest.  
 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.  
 Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy is your Son Jesus, O God,  
 Walking this earth, feeding the hungry, calling the lost, noticing the forgotten,  
 healing those who reached out, teaching those who sought wisdom,  
 he revealed your kingdom in our midst.  
 Today we thank you for all Jesus shared with us  
 to show us that you are always with us in times of plenty and times of pain.  
 And so we celebrate the mystery of our faith in him:

**Christ has died;  
 Christ is risen;  
 Christ will come again.**

Holy God,  
 When the sounds of our rejoicing fall silent,  
 we remember those who cannot rejoice today,  
 who face times of pain or fear or upheaval.  
 We think especially of those whose countries have been overwhelmed  
 by earthquake, flood and storm, by conflict, drought or famine.

Draw near to them in the power of the Spirit  
 to strengthen and sustain them through Christ's compassion and ours.

Holy Spirit, come now and settle on us  
 and on these gifts of bread and wine.  
 May they become for us Christ's body and life blood,  
 healing, forgiving and making us whole.  
 So may we become Christ's body, the Church,  
 loving and caring throughout the whole world  
 until that day when all creation feasts with you  
 in the fullness of your mercy and peace  
 that we savor today in the name of our Saviour  
 who taught us when we pray to say together:

### **The Apostles Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
 creator of heaven and earth.  
 I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 again 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.**

### **The Story of the Last Supper**

The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread,  
 and when he had given thanks for it, he broke it, and said,  
 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'  
 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying,  
 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in  
 remembrance of me.'  
 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,  
 you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

This is the body of Christ broken for you.

This cup is the blood of Christ shed for you.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Loving God, Christ our Lord, Holy Spirit,  
 you have nourished us, body and soul, in this meal.  
 We have heard your love, so send us out to speak it.  
 We have seen your love, so send us out to show it.  
 We have been fed by your love, so send us out to share it.  
 And let all things be done for your glory. Amen.

### **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. [standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com](mailto:standrewsperthoffering@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**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

**Closing Hymn #350: "To God Be the Glory"**

To God be the glory, who great thing has done!  
God so loved the world! Freely sending the Son,  
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,  
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the earth hear God's voice!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the people rejoice!  
Oh come to the Father through Jesus the Son  
and give God the glory, who great things has done!

Oh perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
To every believer the promise of God;

That when the offender, repenting, believes,  
Through Jesus' atonement, full pardon receives! (Refrain)

Great things God has taught us, great things God has done,  
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son,  
but purer and higher and greater will be  
our wonder, our gladness, when Jesus we see! [Refrain]

**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.