

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2025

First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**FOURTH SUNDAY in LENT**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP** *(inspired by Psalm 32)*

One: In times of trouble, in days of fear,  
**All: Steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.**  
One: When we are lost and lonely, not sure of our place,  
**All: Steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.**  
One: When we are hard-hearted and cynical,  
**All: Steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.**  
One: When we struggle to believe God's promise of redemption,  
**All: Steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.**  
One: Together we look to God to teach us the way we should go.  
**All: Steadfast love surrounds us, as together we place our trust in the Lord.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" GtG 435

1. **There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
like the wideness of the sea.  
There's a kindness in God's justice,  
which is more than liberty.  
There is no place where earth's sorrows  
are more felt than up in heaven.  
There is no place where earth's failings  
have such kindly judgment given.**
2. **For the love of God is broader  
than the measures of the mind.  
And the heart of the Eternal  
is most wonderfully kind.**

*(continued...)*

**If our love were but more faithful,  
we would gladly trust God's Word,  
and our lives reflect thanksgiving  
for the goodness of our Lord.**

Words: Frederick William Faber, 1854, alt.

Music: IN BABILONE, Dutch melody; arr. Julius Rontgen, ca. 1906  
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### **UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Merciful God,  
we confess that we have strayed from your ways and wasted your blessings.  
You gave us the earth for our home,  
but we squander earth's resources and hoard its bounty.  
You gave us neighbors to love,  
but we pursue selfish ambitions  
and often cut ourselves off from you and from people we disdain.  
You gave us the commandments that lead to human flourishing,  
but we break your law and forsake your love.  
Forgive us our sin and bring us to repentance.  
Draw our wandering hearts back to you  
that we may find freedom in obedience to your love.  
Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.**

### **SILENT CONFESSION**

#### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(based on Psalm 32 and II Corinthians 5)*

**One:** We are assured that God forgives the guilt of our sin.  
**All:** **“Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”**  
**One:** Happy are those to whom God imputes no iniquity and in whose spirit is no deceit.  
**All:** **Rejoice, for God has brought us back to life!**  
**One:** Know that whoever is in Christ is a new creation.  
**All:** **“The old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us...and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”**  
**One:** Friends, put on the new being and become ambassadors for Christ, for we are forgiven.  
**All:** **Thanks be to God!**

## THE PEACE

**One:** The peace of Christ be with you all.

**All:** **And also with you.**

*(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)*

## THE WORD

**SCRIPTURE READINGS** Luke 15:1-3,11b-32  
II Corinthians 5:14-21

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

**SERMON** “Grace, Disgrace, Embrace” by Pastor Bill Vincent

**\*HYMN** “Help Us Accept Each Other” GtG 754

- 1. Help us accept each other  
as Christ accepted us;  
teach us as sister, brother,  
each person to embrace.  
Be present, Lord, among us  
and bring us to believe  
we are ourselves accepted,  
and meant to love and live.**
- 2. Teach us, O Lord, your lessons,  
as in our daily life  
we struggle to be human  
and search for hope and faith.  
Teach us to care for people,  
for all, not just for some,  
to love them as we find them  
or as they may become.**
- 3. Let your acceptance change us,  
so that we may be moved  
in living situations  
to do the truth in love;  
to practice your acceptance  
until we know by heart  
the table of forgiveness,  
and laughter's healing art.**

*(continued...)*

4. **Lord, for today's encounters  
with all who are in need,  
who hunger for acceptance,  
for justice and for bread,  
we need new eyes for seeing,  
new hands for holding on:  
renew us with your Spirit;  
Lord, free us; make us one!**

Words: Fred Kaan, 1974

Music: BARONITA, Doreen Potter, 1974

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**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**In life and in death we belong to God.  
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,  
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**We trust in God,  
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.  
In sovereign love God created the world good  
and makes everyone equally in God's image,  
male and female, of every race and people,  
to live as one community.  
But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.  
Ignoring God's commandments,  
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,  
accept lies as truth,  
exploit neighbor and nature,  
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.  
We deserve God's condemnation.  
Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.  
In everlasting love,  
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people  
to bless all families of the earth.  
Hearing their cry,  
God delivered the children of Israel  
from the house of bondage.**

*(continued...)*

Loving us still,  
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.  
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,  
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,  
God is faithful still.

With believers in every time and place,  
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death  
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(from *A Brief Statement of Faith*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

#### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Pour out your Spirit upon us, O God.  
All: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER (Contemporary)

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.

#### OFFERING

*Invitation*

*Reflection*

*\*Unison Prayer of Dedication*

Lord of all, we give you thanks for your unfailing love. All that we have and all that we are is a gift from you, and we return it to you now with thanks and praise. Take and bless what we offer here today, that it may be used to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, liberate the oppressed, care for the suffering, and share the good news of your redeeming love with the world. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

## SENDING

\*CLOSING HYMN “God’s Great Love Is So Amazing!” StF 2145 [Tune 465]

1. God’s great love is so amazing!  
See – a shepherd with his flocks!  
Ninety-nine are safely grazing;  
one is lost among the rocks.  
That good shepherd goes and searches  
till he finds the one astray.  
So God says to fill our churches  
with the ones who’ve lost their way.

2. God in love is always seeking!  
See – a woman with her broom!  
For a single coin she’s sweeping  
ev’ry corner of the room.  
When it’s found she calls each neighbor,  
telling friends from all around.  
So God says to search and labor  
till God’s precious ones are found.

3. God keeps waiting, searching, yearning!  
See – a father’s heart-felt joy!  
Thankful for his son’s returning,  
he runs out to greet his boy.  
To the angry older brother,  
hear the father’s patient call.  
So God says to love each other,  
for in Christ God loves us all.

Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

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## \*CHARGE AND BLESSING

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...

All: ...Amen.

## POSTLUDE

*(next page...)*

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