

Living Stones

“You yourselves are being built like living stones into a spiritual temple.” (1 Peter 2.5)

Mason First Presbyterian Church

To be added to or removed from this list, please notify Bill.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2020 +++ 15TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

I encourage you to set aside some time today for personal worship using these or other resources.

An audio recording of this entire service is available at www.masonpresbyterian.org.

You are welcome to share this with your friends.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you call your church to witness that in Christ we are reconciled to you. Help us so to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may turn to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Call to Worship

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

I called to God: “Lord, save my life!”

God has delivered my soul from death.

Rejoice with me! The lost are found.

There is joy in the presence of God.

Let us worship God!

(Romans 1:7; Psalm 116:4, 8; Luke 15:9-10)

Hymn: “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah”

(Printed music and a simple recording of this hymn is available [here](#).)

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but thou art mighty. Hold me with thy powerful hand.

Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,

feed me till I want no more; feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow.

Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.

Strong deliver, strong deliverer,

be thou still my strength and shield; be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside.

Death of death, and hell’s destruction, land me safe on Canaan’s side.

Songs of praises, songs of praises

I will ever give to thee; I will ever give to thee.

(lyrics by William Williams, 1762; stanza 1, trans. Peter Williams, 1771; stanzas 2-3, trans. William Williams, 1772)

Call to Confession

We are a people born of water and the Spirit.

We have made promises to be Christ’s faithful disciples,

and to show his love to our life’s end.

Although we fail to fulfill those baptismal vows,

God's faithful love endures forever.

Confident of God's grace,
let us confess our sin and the sin of this world.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,
in your gracious presence
we confess our sin and the sin of this world.
Although Christ is among us as our peace,
we are a people divided against ourselves
as we cling to the values of a broken world.
The profit and pleasures we pursue
lay waste the land and pollute the seas.
The fears and jealousies that we harbor
set neighbor against neighbor
and nation against nation.

We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom,
of intellect and reason,
and have turned them into bonds of oppression.

Lord, have mercy upon us;
heal and forgive us.
Set us free to serve you in the world
as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ.

(Silent prayers of confession)

Assurance of Pardon

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.
The old life has gone; a new life has begun. (*2 Corinthians 5:17*)
Know that you are forgiven
and be at peace.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Hymn: "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

(Printed music and a simple recording of this hymn is available [here](#).)

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.

For the love of God is broader than the measures of the mind.
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.
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.

(lyrics by Frederick William Faber, 1854, alt.)

Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God,

because we are not strong enough
to pray as we should,
you provide Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit
to intercede for us in power.
In this confidence we ask you
to accept our prayers.
God of mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Let us pray for the Church...

(silent prayer)

Faithful God, you formed your Church from the despised of the earth
and showed them mercy,
that they might proclaim your salvation to all.
Strengthen those whom you choose today,
that they may faithfully endure all trials
by which you conform your Church to the cross of Christ.
God of mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Let us pray for creation...

(silent prayer)

Creator of all,
you entrusted the earth to the human race,
yet we disrupt its peace with violence
and corrupt its purity with our greed.
Prevent your people from ravaging creation,
that coming generations
may inherit lands brimming with life.
God of mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Let us pray for the world...

(silent prayer)

Sovereign God,
you hold both the history of nations
and the humble life of villages in your care.
Preserve the people of every nation from tyrants,
heal them of disease, lead them to peace,
and protect them in time of upheaval and disaster,
that all may enter the kingdom that cannot be shaken.
God of mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Let us pray for those who govern us...

(silent prayer)

God Most High,
in Jesus of Nazareth you show us the authority that pleases you:
for he rules not by power or might,
but serves in obedience to your will.
We pray for all in authority over us:
for our president, for Congress,
for our governor, and for our state legislature.
Deliver them from vain ambitions
that they may govern in wisdom and justice.
God of mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Let us pray for this community...

(silent prayer)

Merciful God,
since Jesus longed to protect Jerusalem
as a hen gathers her young under her wings,
we ask you to guard and strengthen all who live and work here.
Deliver your people from jealousy and contempt
that they may show mercy to all their neighbors.
God of mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Let us pray for all who suffer any sorrow or trial...

(silent prayer)

Compassionate God,
your Son gives rest to those weary with heavy burdens.
Heal the sick in body, mind, and spirit.
Lift up the depressed.
Befriend those who grieve.
Comfort the anxious.
Stand with all victims of abuse and violence.
Uphold those who live with addiction.
Fill us all with your Holy Spirit
that we may bear each other's burdens
and so fulfill the law of Christ.
God of mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Let us give thanks for the lives of the departed
who now have rest in God...

(silent prayer)

Eternal God,
your love is stronger than death,
and your passion more fierce than the grave.
We rejoice in the lives of those
whom you have drawn into your eternal embrace.
Keep us in joyful communion with them
until we join the saints of every people and nation,
gathered before your throne in ceaseless praise.
God of mercy, *hear our prayer.*

God of glory,
you see how all creation groans in labor
as it awaits redemption.
As we work for and await your new creation,
we trust that you will answer our prayers with grace,
and fulfill your promise
that all things work together for good
for those who love you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer

And now, with the confidence of the children of God,
let us pray.

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 evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. *Amen.*

Invitation to Offering

Do good and share what you have,
for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (*Hebrews 13:16*)

Let us return to God the offerings of our life
and the gifts of the earth.

Offertory Response: "Praise, God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" (Trinity version)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise Christ, all people here below;
praise Holy Spirit evermore;
praise Triune God, whom we adore. *Amen.*

(lyrics by Neil Weatherhogg, 1988)

Prayer for Illumination

Testify to us, O God,
by the voice of your Spirit.
Put your law in our hearts,
write your word in our minds,
and show your will in our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 14:19-31

(The Israelites are on the run! They are trying to escape from slavery in Egypt, and are being relentlessly pursued by Pharaoh's mighty army...)

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn

the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21 (The Song of Moses and the Song of Miriam)

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.
The LORD is my strength and my might,
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.
The LORD is a warrior;
the LORD is his name.

“Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he cast into the sea;
his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea.*
The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.
Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power—
your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.
In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries;
you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble.
At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up,
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.’
You blew with your wind, the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

“Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendor, doing wonders?”

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.”

* *or Sea of Reeds*

New Testament Lesson: Romans 14:1-12

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and

those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written,

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise to God.”

So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to Jesus, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

After the readings:

The words of eternal life,
by which we have come to believe. (*John 6:68-69*)
Thanks be to God.

Antem: “Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive”

(*You can listen to the anthem [here.](#)*)

Forgive our sins as we forgive, you taught us, Lord, to pray;
but you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.

How can your pardon reach and bless the unforgiving heart,
that broods on wrongs and will not let old bitterness depart?

In blazing light your cross reveals the truth we dimly knew;
how trifling other's debts to us; how great our debt to you!

Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls and bid resentment cease;
then by your mercy reconciled, our lives will spread your peace.

(words and music by Nancy Raabe)

Sermon: “Racism and Christianity in America (Part 14: 1968-2020 and Concluding Reflections)”

The sermon is available in printed form at www.masonpresbyterian.org, or attached to this email.

An audio recording of the sermon is also available at www.masonpresbyterian.org.

Hymn: “Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain”

(A simple recording of this hymn is available [here](#).)

Come, you faithful, raise the strain of triumphant gladness!
God has brought forth Israel into joy from sadness,
loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke Jacob's sons and daughters;
led them with unmoistened foot through the Red Sea waters.

'Tis the spring of souls today: Christ has burst his prison,
and from three days' sleep in death as a sun has risen.
All the winter of our sins, long and dark, is flying
from the Light, to whom we give laud and praise undying.

Now the queen of seasons, bright with the day of splendor,
with the royal feast of feasts comes its joy to render;
comes to glad Jerusalem, who with true affection
welcomes in unwearied strains Jesus' resurrection!

Neither could the gates of death, nor the tomb's dark portal,
nor the watchers, nor the seal hold you as a mortal:
but today, among your own, you appear, bestowing
your deep peace, which evermore passes human knowing.

(lyrics by John of Damascus, 8th cent.; trans. John Mason Neale, 1859, alt.)

Blessing

May the lamb upon the throne
be your shepherd,
guiding you to the water of life,
and wiping away every tear. *(Revelation 7:17)*
Amen!



The Crossing of the Red Sea by Nicolas Poussin (1634)
(source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Crossing_of_the_Red_Sea.jpg)

Credits

*Prayers courtesy of the PC(USA)'s 2018 Book of Common Worship
Scripture passages are from the New Revised Standard Version
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