



GRACE COVENANT

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Service of Worship September 10, 2023 9:30am
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Gathering

SONG TO GATHER "Here as in Heaven" as recorded by Elevation Worship
Praise Team

*The atmosphere is changing now, for the Spirit of the Lord is here.
The evidence is all around that the Spirit of the Lord is here.
Overflow in this place, fill our hearts with your love; your love surrounds us.
You're the reason we came, to encounter your love; your love surrounds us.*

*A miracle can happen now; for the spirit of the Lord is here.
The evidence is all around that the spirit of the Lord is here.
Overflow in this place, fill our hearts with you love; your love surrounds us.
You're the reason we came, to encounter your love; your love surrounds us.*

WELCOME Barbara Douglas

*CALL TO WORSHIP Rev. Susan Cox

ONE: O God, listen to our cry! Hear our prayers!

**ALL: From the ends of the earth, we cry to you for help
when our hearts are overwhelmed.**

ONE: Lead us to the towering rock of safety,
for you are our safe refuge.

**ALL: Let us live forever in your sanctuary,
safe beneath the shelter of your wings!
Let us worship God!**

*SONG TO PRAISE "How Can I Keep from Singing" as recorded by Chris Tomlin
ALL

There is an endless song, echoes in my soul, I hear the music ring.
And though the storms may come, I am holding on to the rock I cling.
How can I keep from singing your praise?
How can I ever say enough ~ how amazing is your love?
How can I keep from shouting your name?
I know I am loved by the King, and it makes my heart want to sing.

I will lift my eyes in the darkest night, for I know my Savior lives.
And I will walk with you knowing you'll see me through, and sing the songs you give.
How can I keep from singing your praise?
How can I ever say enough ~ how amazing is your love?
How can I keep from shouting your name?
I know I am loved by the King, and it makes my heart want to sing.

I can sing in the troubled times, sing when I win.
I can sing when I lose my step and fall down again.
I can sing 'cause you pick me up, sing 'cause you're there.
I can sing 'cause you hear me Lord when I call to you in prayer.
I can sing with my last breath, sing for I know
That I'll sing with the angels, and the saints around the throne.

How can I keep from singing your praise?
How can I ever say enough ~ how amazing is your love?
How can I keep from shouting your name?
I know I am loved by the King, and it makes my heart...

I am loved by the King, and it makes my heart...
I am loved by the King, and it makes my heart want to sing.

A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

Carrie DeVries

(Children ages 4 through 1st grade may go to Awakening to Worship, our child-friendly worship time. Greeters at the back of the Sanctuary will go with children to Room 12 downstairs where parents may pick up their children following worship. Our Nursery welcomes young children and our ushers can assist families to the nursery located in the children's wing. Worship bags are available for children who stay in worship.)

CALL TO CONFESSION *(One)*

Rev. Susan Cox

When we offer God our confession, we join the beautiful work of reconciliation, which begins with our reconciling with God. Trusting in our Partner in grace, let us make our confession.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(Together)*

God of tender mercies, we admit that sometimes we don't know what to do with ourselves. We anger at the slightest insult and imagine great vengeance upon those who wronged us. We laze about in the good news of our faith and do not consider the deep commitment of faith. We care for ourselves but not for others. Forgive us, we pray. Forgive us, help us to repent, and make us whole. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

ONE: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: **And also with you and all others!**

*SONG OF PEACE

"Down to the River to Pray"

Traditional Spiritual

ALL

As I went down to the river to pray, studying about that good old way and who shall wear the starry crown Good Lord, show me the way.

Oh, *brothers* let's go down, let's go down, come on down.

Oh, *brothers* let's go down, down to the river to pray.

As I went down to the river to pray, studying about that good old way and who shall wear the starry crown Good Lord, show me the way.

Oh, *sisters* let's go down, let's go down, come on down.

Oh, *sisters* let's go down, down to the river to pray.

As I went down to the river to pray, studying about that good old way and who shall wear the starry crown Good Lord, show me the way.

Oh, *children* let's go down, let's go down, come on down.

Oh, *children* let's go down, down to the river to pray.

Equipping

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Acts 12:1-17 (NRSV)

Barbara Douglas

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover.

While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him. The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." He did so. Then he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. On recognizing Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she insisted that it was so. They said, "It is his angel." Meanwhile Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the gate, they saw him and were amazed. He motioned to them with his hand to be silent, and described for them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he added, "Tell this to James and to the believers." Then he left and went to another place.

Holy Wisdom, Holy Words **Thanks be to God!**

SONG TO REFLECT

"Let it Rain"

as recorded by Crowder

Praise Team

*Is there anybody's sunshine been turned to rain? Is there anyone's blue sky been turned to gray?
Is there anybody's good time turned out real bad? Is there anyone's happiness turned out sad?*

And I know I can't trust in the things that I see. All I know, he's at work and he's working on me.

*So let it rain, let it pour; Lord, I need you more and more. Let it rain, rain down on me.
Every day, whatever you want, not my will, but yours, Lord. Let it rain, rain down on me.*

*Is there anybody's mountain too tall to climb? Is there anybody's faith feel like you're running dry?
Let me tell you, he's able; he's done it for me. He can make ev'ry mountain,
he'll throw that mountain into the sea.*

*Let it rain, let it pour; Lord, I need you more and more. Let it rain, rain down on me.
Every day, whatever you want, not my will, but yours, Lord. Let it rain, rain down on me.*

Yeah, the same God who brought the sunshine, is the same one who brings the rain.

Yeah, the same God who made the sunshine, is the same one who knows my name.

*So let it rain, let it pour; Lord, I need you more and more. Let it rain, rain down on me.
Every day, whatever you want, not my will, but yours, Lord. Let it rain, rain down on me.*

*So let it rain if you want. You are God, and I am not. Let it rain, rain down on me.
Every day, whatever you want, not my will, but yours, Lord. Let it rain, rain down on me.*

SERMON

“The Power of a Church’s Prayer”

Rev. Susan Cox

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

A CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

SONG FOR GIVING

“How Can I Keep from Singing (*My Life Flows On*)”
Praise Team

Traditional Hymn

*My life flows on in endless song, above earth’s lamentation.
I hear the real, though far off song that hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife I hear that music ringing.
It sounds an echo in my soul. How can I keep from singing?*

*What thought the tempest ‘round me roars, I know the truth, it liveth.
What though the darkness ‘round me close, songs in the night it giveth.
No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I’m clinging.
Since love is lord of heav’n and earth, how can I keep from singing?*

*When tyrants tremble, sick with fear, and hear their death knells ringing.
When friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing?
In prison cell and dungeon vile our thoughts to them are winging.
When friends by shame are undefiled, how can I keep from singing?*

[Sending](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Barbara Douglas

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

Rev. Susan Cox

SONG TO SEND

“All the People Said ‘Amen’”
ALL

as recorded by Matt Maher

**You are not alone if you are lonely.
When you feel afraid, you're not the only.
We are all the same, in need of mercy, to be forgiven and be free.
It's all you got to lean on, but thank God, it's all you need.**

**And all the people said, "Amen." Whoa - and all the people said, "Amen."
Give thanks to the Lord, for his love never ends.
And all the people said, "Amen."**

**If you're rich or poor, well, it don't matter.
Weak or strong, you know love is what we're after.
We're all broken, but we're all in this together.
God knows we stumble and fall,
And he so loved the world, he sent his son to save us all.**

**And all the people said, "Amen." Whoa - and all the people said, "Amen."
Give thanks to the Lord, for his love never ends.
And all the people said, "Amen."**

**Blessed are the poor in spirit who are torn apart.
Blessed are the persecuted and the pure in heart.
Blessed are the people hungry for another start,
For theirs is the kingdom, the kingdom of God.**

**And all the people said, "Amen." Whoa - and all the people said, "Amen."
Give thanks to the Lord, for his love never ends.
And all the people said, "Amen." (2x)**

GOD'S PEACE TO YOU

Some music is reprinted by permission of CCLI 1154643 and OneLicense A-705105.
Our Church Streaming & Podcast Licenses are CSPL 048834 through CCLI & included in OneLicense A-705105.
Any videos are shown by permission of CVLI #504397326.

RECORD YOUR ATTENDANCE AT TODAY'S WORSHIP SERVICE WITH OUR VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE PAD:
Click this link: <https://bit.ly/GCPCattendance>, or scan the QR Code below, and it will take you to the link.

