

WORSHIP SERVICE PLAN**(Traditional & Online Service)**

Sing a New Song, Part III • Fifth Sunday in Easter

1 Samuel 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-55*"Sing Transformation"*

Songs come from places of great change in our lives.

(online only) Preparation for Worship

Gather these items for worship. If you don't have a particular item, fret not:

- a piece of white cloth
- an end table or stand
- a plate
- a cup
- a glass or bowl of water
- a lighter/match
- a symbol of your accomplishment
- a computer or internet-accessible device
- a thank you card to God for something this week



For each item you have, thank God for the provision. For each piece you do not have, thank God you don't need it. Place the table/stand in the area you plan to worship. If more than one person will be present, place the table in the middle of where you will be seated. Drape the cloth over it. Arrange the cup, plate, glass of water, and other items on the table. Keep the Bible in front of you.

Questions for the announcement loop*In preparing for Worship, consider the following:*

- As you think of it, what's the best "thank you" you've ever expressed to God?
- How can anyone tell whether God has done anything great in your life?
- What's the most spontaneous thing you've ever done?
- What role does music play in your faith?

(10am only) Choral Introit*"Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia"* GTG #251**(10am only) Prelude:***"Praise Him! Praise Him!"* arr. Mark Hayes**Opening Sentence****1 Samuel 2:1 (CEB)**

My heart rejoices in the LORD.

My strength rises up in the LORD!

My mouth mocks my enemies

because I rejoice in your deliverance.

We are glad to be worshipping with you! We have a few Community Notes for you to consider as we worship throughout the week...

God Provides

One of the difficulties of life is, of course, the sheer number of things out of our control. Sometimes, for all our efforts, it seems like there's some kind of cosmic momentum moving against us, even despite us. So when we seek God's help, on our terms, we meet with disappointment. But we should rejoice (even with singing) that God actually does provide. It may not be on our terms, but God, the God of Creation, responds to us. That's an amazing thing! As you move through the week, make a list of what God has provided for you. Then compare your list with others'.

Congregational Meeting

On Sunday, April 21st, the Congregation met to address a request from the Civitans for the installation of a permanent fence structure and a presentation by the Session on a recommendation concerning the Manse as well as, more broadly, thoughts toward addressing many of other needs throughout our church campus. The Congregation approved the fence request. As for the recommendation concerning the Manse, after considerable deliberation, the Congregation elected to explore no longer maintaining a Manse. So the Session will research options and implications for that and return with more information. In the meantime please do pray for

your leadership as they prayerfully seek God's path through all of this.

Church Music Fact

"I Love to Tell the Story" is a well-known hymn which was written as a poem by an English evangelist, Katherine Hankey. It was set to music by William G. Fischer.

Hankey had a serious spell of sickness while on a mission in Africa. During her long days of convalescence, she wrote a long piece on the life of Jesus in 1866 in two parts. The first part was a poem of fifty stanzas titled "The Story Wanted" (dated 29 January 1866), and second part titled "The Story Told" (dated 18 November 1866).

...Certain verses were selected (from Part Two) to make the hymn, "I Love to Tell the Story".

The tune was composed by William G. Fischer, a professor of music at Girard College, Philadelphia, PA and appeared in *Fischer's Joyful Songs, Nos. 1 to 3* published in 1869 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by *Methodist Episcopal Book Room*.

—from *Wikipedia*

Sing a New Song

We continue our study with the Follow Me curriculum series from the denomination, as we move through the Easter Season, centered on the theme "Sing a New Song!" The study offers the opportunity to think about music in the life of faith and the power music affords us for sharing what can't always be put into words. The study materials are available from our website, Facebook page, and from the church office. Opportunities to join with others in the study happen on Monday nights and on Sunday mornings (for children and youth). Contact the church office or Mandy Ealy (or Christian Education Director) for more information.

The Mission Yard Sale!

Thanks to everyone who helped make our Mission Yard Sale a success! We especially thank the members of the Community Life Committee for organizing it and leading us in the effort. They raised a net total of \$6,331.45!

Sing Out Your Hearts!

Next weekend our Pastor and his family will be attending the graduation of their eldest from college! In light of our worship series, we are taking the opportunity to use song as our principal expression of worship. In the morning, we will have a hymn sing! If you have a particular song you'd like to sing, please communicate that to Noah Melton by Sunday, April 28th, and we will do our best to accommodate. In the evening, we will have a SongFest! If you have a particular song you'd like to see and sing, please communicate that to Caroline Massey by Sunday, April 28th, and we will do our best to accommodate.

(10am only) Greet one another in Christ!

(10am only) "He Lives" (CEL #368) (chorus)
He lives, He lives! Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me
along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You asked me how I know he lives?
He lives within my heart!

Songs come from places of great change in our lives.

In this moment, let us take a deep breath, silence our devices, and continue in worship together. As you are able in heart and body, let us stand together...(pause)

(10am only) Call to Worship

God has given us so many gifts!

God has given us hope!

God has given us love!

God has given us provision!

God has given us God's own Spirit!

God has given us music!

Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Hallelujah!**Let us sing our opening song together...****Sing:**

"I Love to Tell the Story" (GTG#462) (lyrics p.8)

Prayer of Confession/Preparation

In our efforts to bend fate to our will, we sometimes miss the good God is already doing in our lives. That's just wrong. It's important to talk about our shortcomings so that we're ready to hear what God has to say. Let us begin with silent prayer...

(Please pray silently...)

Pray: Risen Christ, we ask you to answer but we don't listen. We ask you to intervene but we meddle anyway. We ask you to solve our problems but we impose our own solutions. We ask you to fix, to heal, to weave back together and yet we continue to break, to wound, and to tear apart. What's more, we want you to work on our timeline. Forgive us for thinking we know better than you. Forgive us for not waiting, not trusting. You honor us by remembering us. Help us be mindful of your help and rest. Thank you for seeing in us a people worth saving. Help us see what you do, Great God. Gratefully, we pray this; thank you for listening, God. Amen.

(10am only) Assurance of Pardon

God's love can change everything, even the power of our sins over us. And it is God's will that we have this power:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

(10am only) Gloria Patri (Glory to God)

Glory be to the Father

And to the Son

And to the Holy Ghost

As it was in the beginning

It is now and ever shall be

World without end: Amen, amen.

Reading of Scripture

Say: The Word of God is alive and moving and free because of God's Spirit. Thus God provides the Word of the Lord to us by the power of that same

Spirit. Let us be open to this gift of God and ask for help to understand. Let us pray...(everyone sings)

Pray/Sing: "Thy Word Is a Lamp unto My Feet" (GTG #458) (from Psalm 119)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Listen closely to the Word of God to us all and our ongoing place in God's story...

(online: Read: 1 Samuel 2:1-10 & Luke 1:46-55)

Read: 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (CEB)

Hannah rejoices in God's provision.

¹ Then Hannah prayed:

My heart rejoices in the LORD.

My strength rises up in the LORD!

My mouth mocks my enemies because I rejoice in your deliverance.

² No one is holy like the LORD—no, no one except you!

There is no rock like our God!

³ Don't go on and on, talking so proudly, spouting arrogance from your mouth, because the LORD is the God who knows, and he weighs every act.

⁴ The bows of mighty warriors are shattered, but those who were stumbling now dress themselves in power!

⁵ Those who were filled full now sell themselves for bread, but the ones who were starving are now fat from food!

The woman who was barren has birthed seven children, but the mother with many sons has lost them all!

⁶ The LORD!

He brings death, gives life, takes down to the grave, and raises up!

⁷ The LORD!

He makes poor, gives wealth, brings low, but also lifts up high!

⁸ God raises the poor from the dust, lifts up the needy from the garbage pile. God sits them with officials,

gives them the seat of honor!
 The pillars of the earth belong to the LORD;
 he set the world on top of them!
⁹ God guards the feet of his faithful ones,
 but the wicked die in darkness
 because no one succeeds by strength alone.
¹⁰ The LORD!
 His enemies are terrified!
 God thunders against them from heaven!
 The LORD!
 He judges the far corners of the earth!
 May God give strength to his king
 and raise high the strength of his anointed one.

Read: Luke 1:46-55 (CEB)

Mary rejoices in God's provision.

⁴⁶ Mary said,
 "With all my heart I glorify the Lord!
⁴⁷ In the depths of who I am
 I rejoice in God my savior.
⁴⁸ He has looked with favor
 on the low status of his servant.
 Look! From now on,
 everyone will consider me highly favored
⁴⁹ because the mighty one
 has done great things for me.
 Holy is his name.
⁵⁰ He shows mercy to everyone,
 from one generation to the next,
 who honors him as God.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm.
 He has scattered those
 with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.
⁵² He has pulled the powerful
 down from their thrones
 and lifted up the lowly.
⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
 and sent the rich away empty-handed.
⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
 remembering his mercy,
⁵⁵ just as he promised to our ancestors,
 to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants
 forever."

*One: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the
 Word of God among us, for the Word of God within
 us...*

All: Thanks be to God!

Children's Sermon

Adults, you'll need:

- a birthday hat
- "Singing Can Celebrate"*
- (Showing the hat) Do you know what this is? Yes!...It's a birthday hat. What's it for?...How do we use it? And what usually happens at a birthday party?...
 - We sing, "Happy Birthday" to the person...what happens when we do that?
 - Singing our faith is like that. When God does something for us we should be having a God-party! There should be presents, cake, decorations, a crazy hat, and singing! We should be singing to celebrate the things God does.
 - So when you are around the people who care about you, sing something to God to thank God for giving you everything.
 - Don't forget to pray!

Anthem: "Risen Indeed" by Larry Shackley; Soloist: David Ealy

"Sing Transformation"

So, according to *WordHippo.com*, the phrase, "Reversal of Fortune" means "An event resulting in great loss."

Yikes.

We spend a lot of our lives trying to avoid or mitigate that. Who wants to lose *fortune*? Who wants to be riding high only be knocked down?

But this isn't what the heroes in either of our readings are dealing with. In fact, the reversals they are celebrating are expansive, life-changing, and life-giving. They reflect, not loss per se, but remarkable *gain*. The songs come from different times, different women, different circumstances, but are celebrating bookends of the powerful grace God ushers in through these women and the sons they will bear.

Hannah's Song

Hannah's story is full of irony. Delicious, voluminous irony. She spends her days thinking God doesn't *hear* her. Her husband means well, but he doesn't *hear* her deepest desire. Eli, a priest who is

supposed to have *God's ear* and an *ear* for God, doesn't know an earnest prayer when he *hears* it and has sons who clearly didn't *listen* to his teaching. And when God finally answers Hannah call for a child, she names her son...(wait for it) ... "God *hears*", Samuel.

I love it.

So 1 Samuel 2 is Hannah's response to God answering her prayer in such spectacular fashion.

It's worth saying here that this is something very personal and unique for Hannah. This is not some kind of treatise by that says all women all called to bear children. That's just not so. It's important to pay attention to what the scripture itself tells us. God heard Hannah's prayer and answered Hannah's prayer. It's really that simple.

But in typical God fashion, God chose to not just bless Hannah. As is alluded to in her song/prayer, God chooses to bless the world. Her son would become the gateway prophet for the establishing of the Kings of Israel and the coming of Jesus Christ himself. God hears indeed.

And we have to know that that's what our prayers are like. We seek God's advice, counsel, comfort or intervention (or all of the above) and God answers. But God answers with a view for the whole of the community, the whole of the world. The blessings coming your way are meant for you, of course. But they are meant for everyone else as well. Thus, Hannah would have no qualms about dedicating Samuel to God and leaving him with Eli. It also explains how over the top her song/prayer is.

She doesn't just sing about getting what she wanted. God answering her prayer goes beyond her circumstance to God reign over the world and bringing the chaos of life to heel. She talks about reversals of all kinds. Rich becoming poor and poor becoming rich, powerful being humbled and the humble rising to power. We might even be disturbed by the language of verse 5:

*Those who were filled full
now sell themselves for bread,
but the ones who were starving*

*are now fat from food!
The woman who was barren
has birthed seven children,
but the mother with many sons
has lost them all!*

Umm...what?

But keep in mind, Hannah is expressing how she *feels*. At best, if we wanted to take this literally, this is a reflection of what happens in life as we know it. Better would be hearing this as another example of how, in Hannah's life of faith, God turns things around. God turns things around for everyone. That status doesn't last. Including the status of our suffering. The status of our isolation and imposition. The status of our needs seemingly going unanswered.

Because we didn't read it, I want to remember, though, that the gateway to this burst of praise was Hannah pouring her heart out to God.

I think that's instructive. We face a great deal of challenges as a congregation. We face challenges as individual families and people. Finances, health, distance, losses, threats of war not staying over there but even coming to our shores. We face uncertainties and confusion on a global scale. Thanks to A.I. we can't even trust our senses anymore. Thanks to social media, we don't even know how to talk with each other for real. We just came through a global pandemic and are still feeling its effects. As we wrestle with what to do about the church campus, our membership, our future, we might feel as barren as Hannah about our prospects. We should be doing as she did: we should be pouring our hearts out to God.

That means praying like nobody's business. That means lifting up our fears, our grief, our deepest wishes before God who actually cares about us and wants to see have good things. In fact, thanks to our other hero, we know even anticipates our needs.

Mary's Song

Mary also was entering into a reversal of fortune. She was being blessed by God's own Spirit to be

the God-bearer, the Theotokos, the Mother of Jesus Christ.

Wow!

But can you imagine how isolating that must have been? Sure, she gets this news from Gabriel, but what's the plan? How is she supposed to tell Joseph? How is she supposed to tell her relatives or friends? I mean, really, she waltzes into the mall to meet up with Betty, Francine and Midge and tells them, "So, listen, God made me pregnant last night."

Right.

And then who does she talk to about the pregnancy itself? Who helps her? And what does she do with the judgment of her community? Would anyone be willing to midwife for her? And how do you ask for advice about carrying and giving birth to—excuse me—*the Messiah!?!?*

It was surely a frightening road. But to her eternal credit she walked forward anyway. And she was inspired to pay a visit to her cousin, Elizabeth.

I can't help but wonder if, in answering Elizabeth and Zechariah's prayers, God was anticipating Mary. Like Hannah, they wanted a child and when it finally happened, their ears, their faith, was tested. At this point, famously for them, Zechariah was struck mute. It doesn't say much about what was happening with Elizabeth. But you can imagine that she had a lot to manage. It's one thing to help so many others with *their* children but this was different. This child had a destiny and everything. And what did she need to do to enable Zechariah? She had a lot to deal with herself and even less time than usual. Yet how could she refuse a visit by Mary?

She's inspired to greet Mary out the gate with words that would cause every fear in Mary to fade:

"God has blessed you above all women, and he has blessed the child you carry. Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:42-43)

Can you imagine it!? Mary didn't have to explain, she didn't have to work it into the conversation. She didn't have to wince at what would surely be the disbelief. With Elizabeth's words, with her profession of faith, Mary could stand there with her fears relieved, her experience affirmed, and her hopes and faith restored. It must have felt like a waterfall. It must have felt like Hannah. So Mary prays and sings.

So much of what Mary sings is like what Hannah sang, celebrating the great reversal of God, not of fortune, but of despair, loneliness, helplessness, powerlessness. God, in that moment and always, made Mary one of the most powerful people to walk the earth. How could she keep from singing?

And like Hannah, keep in mind, Mary is expressing how she *feels*. At best, if we wanted to take this literally, this is a reflection of what happens in life as we know it. Status doesn't last. Better would be hearing this as another example of how, in Mary's life of faith, God turns things around. God turns things around for everyone. That status *doesn't* last. Including the status of our suffering. The status of our isolation and imposition. The status of our needs seemingly going unanswered. God not only answers us, God anticipates our needs. Of course we should sing about it!

Because songs come from places of great change in our lives. Reversals of all kinds all pointing to the tireless grace of God that is willing to live, die and be raised to see to it that we have everything.

For Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Song of Reflection

"In the Bulb There Is A Flower" (GTG #250)
(lyrics p.8)

Offering

God chooses to love us, abundantly. We should respond by choosing to be loving, abundantly. This is why we should give and share what we have and who we are. Let us reflect together on what has been given...

Offertory

"In Christ Alone (My Hope Is Found)" arr. Carol Tornquist

Doxology

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow
Praise God, all creatures here below
Praise God, above heavenly hosts
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Blessing

**Let there be no doubt, Great God: you love us.
And we are grateful. Let there be no doubt,
Great God: we should be loving in turn. As we
receive the gifts you provide, may the gifts we
are meant to be emerge. In the great name of
Jesus Christ, we pray this together. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

- As we pray together, an opportunity will be given to lift up your personal prayers. Take advantage of it! Let us pray...
- "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (GTG #465)
**What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer.**
- Lord God, change can frankly be a dirty word for us. It represents too often the end of cherished things, cherished place, cherished people. It's beyond what we're used to. It's a matter of what holds meaning for us. Holy God, hear us: help us. Help us grieve the changes to our neighborhoods, changes to our culture, changes to our bodies, changes to our beliefs, changes to our church, changes to our own ways of making sense of things. Out of that grief, help us trust you for our futures. Help us rest in the provisions you've made for us since before we were born. Help us place our hopes, our dreams, with you. Teach us to pour our hearts out to you..
- Let the songs of your praise come out of us to bursting. Let the songs of our gratitude shine brightly. Let the songs of your provision ring out everywhere WE go.
- Thus, let us be Godly people. Let us sing of compassion and consolation. Let us sing about your grace and mercy and sense of justice. Let us sing about setting aside safety and embracing risk-taking with you. May our songs be healing

balms, reaching through us to those around us, especially those on our prayer lists and those we will come to know. Help us sing love and give love. Help us sing mercy. Despite our collective answer of violence, of disdain, of division, of cynicism, to your love, may we truly sing and embrace hope instead...(mention the prayers you want to from the Prayer List and Prayer Notebook...)

- Thank you for believing in us, Thank you for transforming us. Thank you for teaching us, even how to pray when words fail us, saying,
- **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.**

Hymn of Sending

(10am) "We Are Marching in the Light of God"
(GTG #853)

1st time: We are marching in the light of God!

2nd time: We are dancing . . .

3rd time: We are praying . . .

4th time: We are singing . . .

5th time: Hallelujah, He has risen indeed!

6th time: We are marching in the light of God!

Sending & Benediction

Let us say together our benediction...

Songs come from places of great change in our lives.

(raise your hands and say) "Get up, take heart, Jesus is still calling you..."; Go, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guide your hearts and minds this day and forever more. Amen!

Sing: "We Are Marching in the Light of God"
(GTG #853)

Hallelujah, He has risen indeed!

Hallelujah, He has risen indeed!

Hallelujah, He has risen indeed!

Hallelujah, He has risen indeed!

He has risen, oo-oo,

Hallelujah, He has risen indeed!
He has risen, oo-oo,
Hallelujah, He has risen indeed!

(10am only) Postlude

"I Know that My Redeemer Liveth" arr. Cindy Berry

SONGS

"I Love to Tell the Story" (GTG#462)

I love to tell the story
of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory,
of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story,
because I know 'tis true;
it satisfies my longings
as nothing else could do.

Refrain:

I love to tell the story;
'twill be my theme in glory
to tell the old, old story
of Jesus and his love.

I love to tell the story;
'tis pleasant to repeat
what seems, each time I tell it,
more wonderfully sweet!
I love to tell the story,
for some have never heard
the message of salvation
from God's own holy Word. [*Refrain*]

I love to tell the story,
for those who know it best
seem hungering and thirsting
to hear it, like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory,
I sing the new, new song,
'twill be the old, old story
that I have loved so long. [*Refrain*]

"In the Bulb There Is A Flower" (GTG #250)

In the bulb there is a flower;
in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,

unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness,
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning;
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing;
in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection;
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.