



# Order of Worship

4th Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2026

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## Call to worship (adapted from *Glory to God* #93)

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates!

**Behold! The Savior of the world is risen!**

Fling wide the portals of your hearts:

**Let us feel the presence of the God's grace and love!**

O Holy spirit, lead us on in worship;

**Call us each by name, that we may give God glory!**

## Call to confession

Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd; I know my own, and my own know me" (John 10:14). In confession, we trust God to know us fully: the good and the bad, the faithful and the sinful. But we also know God's faithfulness, God's mercy, and God's power to redeem us and lead us into new life. Trusting in this promise, let us confess our sins together.

## Prayer of confession

**Gracious God, from before the foundation of the world, you called us by name and pledged your steadfast love. But like ornery sheep, we stray from the fold. You offer to lead us, but we prefer to lead ourselves. Christ laid down his life, yet we refuse to lay down our phones, our plans, our pride.**


**Forgive us, O God. Call us back to the open gate of Christ's redeeming love that we may enter your Beloved Community and find restoration for our souls, reconciliation with our enemies and the glory of abiding with you forevermore. Amen.**

## Assurance of pardon

The proof God's amazing love is this: while we were yet sinners, Christ came to us; Christ died for us; and Christ rose from the dead so that the gates of hell and heaven may be thrown open wide and all of creation renewed. So believe the good news: in Jesus Christ, you are forgiven and restored to new, abundant life.

**Alleluia! Amen!**





**Prayer for illumination** (adapted from Howard Thurman, “Give Me the Listening Ear” Meditations of the Heart)

O God, give us the listening ear. Give us the listening ear that will not shrink from a word that corrects and admonishes; a word that challenges us to deeper consecration and higher resolve; a word that lays bare the needs that make our days uneasy; a word that seizes upon everything decent in our nature and channels it into paths of healing in the lives of others. Give us, O Lord, the listening ear. Amen.

**Scripture readings**

**Sermon**

**Affirmation of faith** (Second Helvetic Confession)

**In all crises and trials of our life we call upon God alone, and do so by the mediation of our only mediator and intercessor, Jesus Christ. For we have been explicitly commanded: “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me” (Psalm 1:15). Moreover, we have a most generous promise from the Lord who said: “If you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you” (John 16:23), and: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). And since it is written: “How are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed?” (Romans 10:14), and since we do believe in God alone, we assuredly call upon God alone, and we do so through Christ alone. Amen.**

**Call for the offering**

Our savior, as the Good Shepherd, leads us to what nourishes, comforts and secures our living. When we reflect upon all that God provides, we see that our cup indeed runs over. In gratitude and in faith, may we practice Christlike generosity to support the living body of Christ that is this church. With joy and thanksgiving, let us offer what is precious to us to God.

**Prayer of dedication**

Shepherding God, you lead us, guard us, prepare us and preserve us. We have responded by giving back to you what has come from your hand. Bless these gifts, and multiply them in the life of your church, so that the gates of salvation may be flung wide, and all your Beloved Community may know the love and the peace that is ours in Christ Jesus. Amen.

**Prayers of the people and the Lord’s Prayer**

Gracious and Loving God, through your son and our savior Jesus Christ you have removed every barrier between our deep needs and your abundant providence. Fling wide heaven’s gates, and allow the prayers and intentions of your people to be received.

You have promised us steadfast love and abiding presence; make us more aware of this divine reality. As we journey through this life, walk along with us. Abide with us in every season, every place along the way. Protect us in the valleys when we are afraid, wounded or grieved. Join us in celebration and wonder in the mountaintop moments too.





Holy Jesus, you know us by name; hear us now as we lift up by name those who need your tender care. *(Here, the worship leader may name specific prayer concerns and joys from the community.)*

Even as we concentrate on the road you have laid before us, lift our eyes to see the sheep who are not of this fold. Teach us, like Christ, to look around, and see those on the margins whom you love. Help us to see your shared likeness in those across the table, whom we consider our enemies. Enable us to be repairers of the breach, opening gates, building bridges, and extending hospitality around Christ's table, so that all God's children may gather and be fed.

Assure us, once again, that your goodness and your mercy go ahead of us, move with us, and follow behind us, urging us onwards in the path of righteousness to greener pastures, still waters, and the restoration of all creation. In the name of the Good Shepherd, we pray, and join our voices in the prayer he taught his sheep: **"Our Father..."**

### **Charge and benediction**

Christ has called you by name to gather here for worship; now he sends you out as sheep among wolves, to do the courageous, faith-filled work of seeking common ground, and building up God's Beloved Community here on earth. May you possess all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ, the empowering Spirit of courage to persevere in the face of resistance, and the undying hope promised in Christ's resurrection that we shall all, in the end, come to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Now may the Lord bless you and keep you; May God make God's face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up the light of their countenance upon those whom you love, both this day and forevermore. Alleluia! **Amen.**

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Liturgy written by Rev. Dr. Aaron Shepherd  
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