



"A Community Of Many Faithing Communities Where All Belong!"

Living Waters Contemplative Life Center | Divine Intervention Ministry to the Homeless
Tippecanoe just.good.food Garden | Food Justice Site PCUSA
Arts and Science Literacy Camps for Children

Welcome To Worship

April 30, 2023

9:30 a.m.



Welcome to this time of being with God and each other.

"Led Through the Gateway of our Hearts" Rev. Trish Eckert

✧ **Prelude** Zo Trembley

✧ **Welcome and community news**

Pastor Trish will be departing for vacation immediately after worship today ☺
We're looking forward to a summer that will be rich in community and connection as we develop opportunities for fellowship on Friday evenings and Saturday gatherings in the Tippe gardens for far-ranging conversations and spiritual practices. Stay tuned!

✧ **Readying Ourselves for Worship**

Surely God is in this place, Holy Ground!

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✧ **A Blessing as we Center Ourselves in this Moment** *Blessing of the Gate*

Press your hand
to this blessing,
here along
the side
where you can feel
its seam.

Follow the seam
and you will find
the hinges
on which
this blessing turns.

Feel how
your fingers
catch on them—
top,
bottom,
the slightest pressure
sending the gate
gliding open
in a glad welcome.

Wait, did I say
press your hand
to this blessing?

What I meant was
press your hand
to your heart.

Rest it over that
place in your chest
that has grown
closed and tight,
where the rust,
with its talent
for making decay
look artful,
has bitten into
what you once
held dear.

Breathe deep.
Press on the knot
and feel how it
begins to give way,
turning upon
the hinge
of your heart.

Notice how it
opens wide
and wider still
as you exhale,

spilling you out
into a realm
where you never
dreamed
to go
but cannot now imagine
living this life
without.

~ Jan L. Richardson

✧ **Becoming Present to God and Each Other - Our Check-in**

~ **The Joy of Passing the Peace** ~

✧ **Kid's Time**

✧ **Gathering as God's People: Gates Invite Us to New Perspectives**

As I read the texts for this week, it got me thinking a lot about gates, and after doing a bit of research, I discovered that scholars have noted that the Bible mentions gates over 400 times, and that gates played an essential part in ancient life.

Throughout the Bible we hear about Lot sitting in the gateway, God promising Abraham he'd possess his enemies' gates, David commanding gates to lift their heads, God breaking down gates, and of course – Jesus referring to himself as “the gate.”

Ancient cities were surrounded by walls and within these walls were gates; these gates were the only way in and out of the city. The city's security depended on the strength of its gates. Gates were made of stone and wood and reinforced with brass and iron bars. Gatekeepers guarded the gates, watching for potential threats and dangers from the outside world.

But, as we'll explore in just a bit through the Bible Wisdom teachings, we'll be hearing a lot of sheep/shepherd/gate/pasture imagery that invites us to think about what these texts might be saying to us in the here and now. Just as we heard in Jan Richardson's blessing, our hearts can be considered a kind of gate – at times in our lives we experience what it is like to have an open heart, and at others, our hearts close – we shut down in an attempt to protect ourselves.

In ancient cities, the gatekeeper closed the city gates at night to protect the city from its enemies, but during the day the city gates were opened. Markets were set up near the open gates so people could buy and sell food, clothing, and other things they needed to live. Without open gates, the city would struggle and eventually die.

This holds true for us, as well – we need to open the gates of our hearts to let in that which sustains us. We need to be open-hearted in our relationships and in our embrace of life. Today, let's contemplate what it might mean that Jesus is “the gate,” notice that we are led rather than pushed, consider the qualities of sheep, and come to understand new perspectives that invite us to live and love more fully.

✧ **Gathering Hymn 837 *What a Fellowship, What a Joy Divine***

✧ **Opening Ourselves to God's Grace**

Children of God: welcome!

Welcome to this place of love and grace,

Welcome to this place of hope and perseverance.

God invites all of us to be a part of the beloved community,

God invites all of us to share in the good news:

We are welcome, just as we are. We are loved, just as we are.

In gratitude for all of this, let us worship God.

✧ **Sharing our Innermost Lives with God**

We are standing at the gate, o loving Shepherd, not sure about the journey. But you have called our names, and in your voice we hear such love and surety. Bring us safely on the journey and strengthen us that we may serve you in all that we do. Amen.

✧ **Special Music *Such Perfect Love my Shepherd Shows*** sung and played by Zo, Betsy, Maynard, and Gary, with congregation joining in as able:

*Such perfect love my Shepherd shows, whose goodness fails me never,
Whose hand all things I need bestows and watches me forever.*

*Where streams of living water flow, my loving Shepherd leads me,
And where the verdant pastures grow with food from heaven feeds me.*

*When vain and foolish oft I strayed, you faithful Shepherd, sought me,
And on your shoulder gently laid, then home rejoicing brought me.*

*I do not fear death's shadowed vale when you are here beside me;
Your rod and staff and strength prevail to comfort and to guide me.*

✧ **Prayer of Intention**

✧ **Bible Wisdom Teaching**

Psalm 23 (a non-gendered version)

God is my shepherd, I shall not want.

God makes me lie down in green pastures,

Leads me beside still waters, and restores my soul.

You lead me in right paths for the sake of Your name.

Even when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,

I shall fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff- they comfort me.

You have set a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

And I shall dwell in the house of God forever.

John 10: 1-10

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his

voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

One: May we hear anew the origin stories of our faith and draw from the roots of our tradition.

All: Thanks be to our God.

✧ *Message Led Through the Gateway of our Hearts*

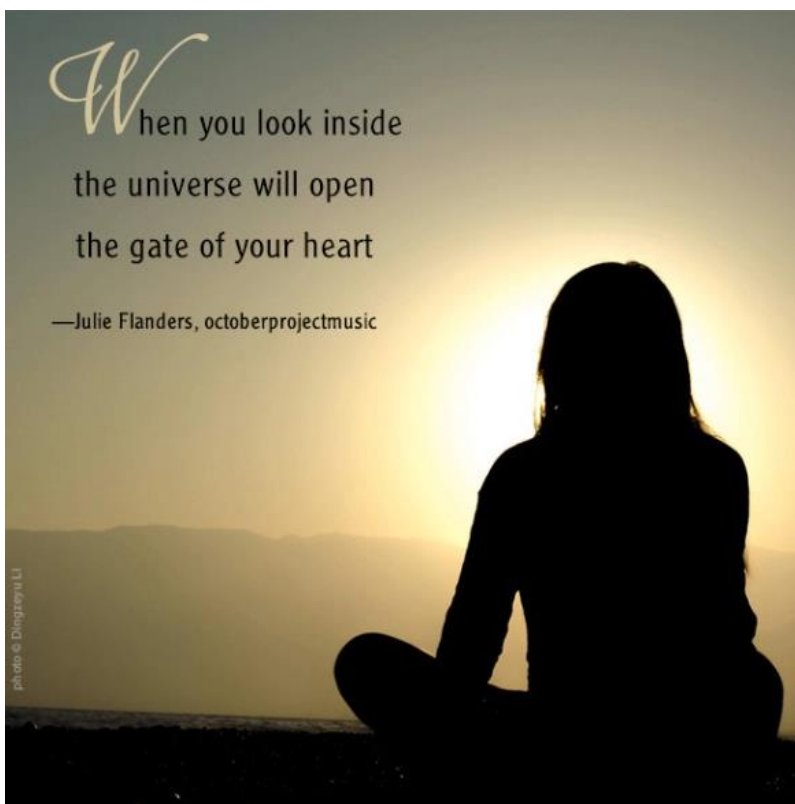


✧ **Reflection Questions**

- As we travel through these days of resurrection, how will you open yourself to the Christ who desires to know you and to be known by you?
- How well do you want to be known?
- Are there any corners of your heart that you resist being known?
- Might those very spaces become a place of prayer, a doorway, a gate that opens into freedom?

(Excerpted from Jan L. Richardson’s blog, “The Painted Prayerbook.”)

✧ Short period of silent reflection



✧ Sharing Our Wisdom

✧ Hymn *Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us*

*Savior, like a shepherd lead us; much we need your tender care.
In your pleasant pastures feed us; for our use your folds prepare.*

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have bought us, yours we are!

*We are yours, in love befriend us, be the guardian of our way;
keep your flock, from sin defend us, seek us when we go astray.*

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, hear your children when we pray!

*Let us always seek your favor; let us always do your will.
Jesus Christ our only Savior, with your love our spirits fill.*

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have loved us, love us still!

✧ Community Prayers & the Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

All: O God, you love us like a good parent, and are present in every aspect of our existence.

May your nature become known and respected by all. May your joy, peace, wholeness and justice be the reality for everyone as we live by the Jesus Way.

Give us all that we really need to live every day for you. And forgive us our failures as we forgive others for their failures.

Keep us from doing those things which are not of you and cause us always to be centered on your love.

For you are the true reality in this, our now, and in all our future.

In the Jesus Way we pray. Amen. (David Sorril)

✧Benediction

The grace of the Word of life rest upon you;
the love of the Source of life embrace you;
and the transforming power of the Breath of life
help, strengthen and surprise you,
this day and all your days. Amen.

Now that the worship has ended, may the service truly begin.

✧Our Response:

Holy One, now we your servants go in peace. Your Word lives on in us.

✧Postlude Zo Trembley

