



Central Congregational United Church of Christ

THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 5, 2024

Ministers / **All of us**

Pastor / **Rev. Gage Church**

Worship Leader / **Cindy Wilder-Towery**

Music Director and Accompanist / **Linda Smith**

Song Leaders / **Gayle Hassler and Janice Ayers**

Prelude

“Precious Memories”

*Opening Hymn

“Arise, Your Light Is Come”

**Arise, your light is come! The Spirit’s call obey;
Show for the glory of your God which shines on you today!**

**Arise, your light is come! Fling wide the prison door;
Proclaim the captive’s liberty, good tidings to the poor.**

**Arise, your light is come! All you in sorrow born,
Bind up the broken-hearted ones and comfort those who mourn.**

**Arise, your light is come! The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing; God’s power will make us strong.**

** indicates to rise in body or spirit.*

***Bold** indicates to speak or sing in unison.*

Opening Prayer

God of power and might,
you sent prophets to your people,
calling us back to your covenant
and teaching us your ways.

In the fullness of time,
you sent us Jesus,
teaching with such authority
that our eyes were opened
to see your ways anew.

**Open our hearts and minds,
that we may understand
and proclaim your teachings
for all to hear. Amen.**

Greetings and Announcements

Passing the Peace

Prayer of Confession

For ignoring the vision breathed by the living Spirit
churning deep within our souls:

**Lord have mercy,
Lord have mercy,
have mercy upon us.**

For refusing to look at the vision alive
within those who look or act or sound different from us:

**Christ have mercy,
Christ have mercy,
have mercy upon us.**

For choosing familiarity, ease and comfort
rather than risking the opportunities afforded in the vision:

**Lord have mercy,
Lord have mercy,
have mercy upon us.**

Assurance of Pardon

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The Reading

Nehemiah 5:1-13

Then there was a great protest of the people and their wives against their fellow Jews. Some said, “With our sons and daughters we are many, and we all need grain to eat and stay alive.” Others said, “We have to mortgage our fields, our vineyards, and our houses in order to get grain during the famine.” Still others said, “We have had to borrow money against our fields and vineyards in order to pay the king’s tax.”

“We are of the same flesh and blood as our kin, and our children are the same as theirs. Yet we are just about to force our sons and daughters into slavery, and some of our daughters are already slaves! There is nothing we can do since our fields and vineyards now belong to others.”

I was very angry when I heard their protest and these complaints. After thinking it over, I brought charges against the officials and the officers. I told them, “You are all taking interest from your own people!” I also called for a large assembly in order to deal with them. “To the best of our ability,” I said to them, “we have bought back our Jewish kin who had been sold to other nations. But now you are selling your own kin, who must then be bought back by us!” At this they were silent, unable to offer a response.

So I continued, “What you are doing isn’t good! Why don’t you walk in the fear of our God? This will prevent the taunts of the nations that are our enemies! I myself, along with my family and my servants, am lending them money and grain. But let’s stop charging this interest! Give it back to them, right now. Return their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses. And give back the interest on money, grain, wine, and oil that you are charging them.”

They replied, “We’ll return everything, and we won’t charge anything else. We’ll do what you’ve asked.”

So I called the priests and made them swear to do what they had promised. I also shook out the fold of my robe, saying, “So may God shake out everyone from their house and property if they don’t keep this promise. So may they be shaken out and emptied!”

The whole assembly said, “Amen,” and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.

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Special Music

“Change My Heart, O God”

Janice Ayers

Message

“One in Every Crowd”

Rev. Gage Church

*Congregational Hymn

“We Gather Together”

**We gather together to ask for God’s blessing,
to live in community, seeking God’s will.**

**We come now, as sisters and brothers, confessing
the sins that divide and the wrong in us still.**

**Beside us, forgiving, enabling, sustaining,
you call us, O Savior, to life that is new.**

**You draw us away from self-centered complaining.
You lead us and guide us in ways that are true.**

All praise to the Spirit, provider, defender.

You offer us freedom, to follow or stray.

Empowering all by the hope you engender.

Grant wisdom and courage to follow your way.

Joys and Concerns

We respond with “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Time of Silence

Pastoral Prayer

The Prayer of Jesus

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, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

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Offering

God is good! **All the time!**

All the time! **God is good!**

Let us share the goodness of our God.

We are “centralchurchtopeka” on Venmo.

*Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God for all that love has done;

Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen.

*Prayer of Dedication

On my own,

what I have to give

doesn't amount to much

in light of all you have given to me

and in the face of so much need.

Put together as a congregation,

what we offer you here in love

becomes more,

not simply added together,

but somehow multiplied in its usefulness.

We ask you to bless our gifts —

and with the addition of your blessing,

just as it was with the loaves and fishes,

there is enough for all.

Amen.

Holy Communion

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious and loving God, you have made us one in the body of Christ
and nourished us at your table with holy food and drink.

Now send us into the world to do the work you have given us to do:

to find the lost and lonely, to heal broken souls,

to free prisoners and to make the powerful care. Amen.

***Closing Hymn**

“This Is the Day”

**This is the day, this is the day
that our God has made, that our God has made;
we will rejoice, we will rejoice
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day that our God has made,
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day that our God has made.**

**This is the day, this is the day
Jesus rose again, Jesus rose again;
we will rejoice, we will rejoice
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day Jesus rose again,
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day Jesus rose again.**

**This is the day, this is the day
when the Spirit came, when the Spirit came;
we will rejoice, we will rejoice
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day when the Spirit came,
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day when the Spirit came.**

***Benediction**

Postlude

“Amen”